

THE INDEPENDENT

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Young Britain. The truth. Starts today



Today we begin a one-week series reporting the biggest survey ever conducted of Britain's young people. Contrary to the popular image of a drug-dazed and sex-crazed 'youth', the survey finds that young Britons are more serious-minded, hard-working and responsible than any generation since the 1950s. Nicole Yeash and Jock O'Sullivan study the results - exclusively in *The Independent*, every day this week.

The startling new research paints a portrait of a responsible generation trying to build a life on endeavour, destroying the image of youth as ill-educated ravers and state spongers.

Although they have taken on some characteristics of Thatcherism, many remain worried about the disintegration of the Welfare State and the insecure job market.

More than 10,000 young people, aged between 12-25, were asked for their views on work, education and society during the two-year programme.

Jo Gardiner, director of the Industrial Society's 2020 Vision survey, said: "We want to give young people the chance to speak up and speak out."

"They set the agenda, they identified the subjects and they are going to take this research and push for change."

The survey shows a startling picture of an optimistic, can-do generation who want

to better themselves through education, while learning practical skills.

They are striving for traditional roots by seeking stability through marriage and family, once declared unfashionable by

youth generations of the Sixties and Seventies. And they say parents who provide material goods at the expense of time with their children amounts to neglect.

Women come out on top as best prepared for the new world, while environmental concerns - seen by many as the domain of youth - take a back seat to social problems closer to home.

Even though young Britons are in favour of traditional institutions, they are paradoxically one of the most liberal generations dedicated to individual rights, including the de-criminalisation of soft drugs and preventative measures against crime as opposed to punitive crackdowns.

Anti-racist and feminist ideals feature

high on the agenda for both sexes. And the majority of men and women believe child care should be shared between parents.

A new political landscape also emerges distinct from Westminster, which is generally regarded as a turn off. The majority are only interested in issues close to home, choosing to ignore national and international affairs.

More than 40 per cent said they have had no involvement in any political activity in the last three years.

Surprisingly, the enduring image of young people enjoying frequent casual sex is blown away. The survey shows that the vast majority are looking for a long-term, stable relationship.

TODAY
Young people aspire to job security, marriage and stability. That's why they are feeling the pressure.

TOMORROW
How tomorrow's people reject swinging sex. And how young women plan to run the country.

TODAY'S NEWS

US attack on Iraq may be delayed

The US pressed on with its build-up of military force in the Gulf yesterday sending the aircraft carrier USS George Washington through the Suez Canal. But there were signs that Washington may have to put a military strike against Saddam Hussein on hold, after failing to win the support of its old Gulf War allies. With only Britain so far showing any sign of committing itself, France confined itself to a verbal condemnation of Baghdad. On a whistle-stop tour of the Middle East, Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, failed to persuade even Kuwait, which Iraq invaded in 1990, to support the use of force in the stand-off. Page 5

CD-Rom robbers

Stealing from banks is no longer the top pursuit for armed robbers; the new target is stores of CD-Roms. Microsoft have just been hit by a heist of their Christmas stock that could cost the company £30m. Page 7

Budget windfall

The Government is £1bn better off than it thought, because of the sharper than expected fall in unemployment. Diane Coyle, our Economics Editor, expects the spare cash may be used to bolster the NHS this winter, and cut government borrowing. Page 6

Oxbridge billions

The wealthiest Oxbridge colleges have greater assets than some of Britain's best-known listed companies, and an income to match. So why do the two elite universities protest that they would have to charge top up fees if the Government stopped subsidies? Page 10

Blair: 'I think I'm a pretty straight sort of guy'

Tony Blair placed his personal reputation on the line yesterday. In an appeal for the public to trust him over the Formula One donations scandal, he put on a polished performance. But, Fran Abrams writes, the matter is unlikely to rest there.

In line with the new tradition of political apologies, the Prime Minister went on television yesterday to say "sorry" to the British public. The issue of Bernie Ecclestone's £1m donation to Labour and his sport's subsequent exemption from a tobacco sponsorship ban had been badly handled, he admitted.

Speaking on BBC1's *On the Record* programme, Mr Blair put up a strong defence against any suggestions of impropriety, saying he had been "hurt and upset" by much that had been written about him.

"I think most people who have dealt with me think I'm a pretty straight sort of guy, and I am," he said.

"I am sorry about this issue. I should have realised it was going to blow up into this type of importance, but I have honestly done what I thought was best for the country ... I would never, ever, do something wrong or improper or change a policy because someone supported or donated money to the party. I didn't in this case."

Mr Blair described suggestions in yesterday's newspapers that donations by Lord Sainsbury had affected planning decisions on supermarkets as "completely ridiculous". The decisions had been made by planning inspectors. "David Sainsbury is getting absolutely pilloried because he is a supporter of the Labour Party," he said.

The Prime Minister's strong performance included a hint that he might be prepared to limit all political donations to £5,000 if Sir Patrick Neill, the public stan-



Public appearance: Tony Blair before he apologized on TV yesterday

dards watchdog who is to investigate the issues, recommended it.

He also promised to publish all donations over £5,000 going back to 1992 if the other parties would do the same. Labour has published all such donations since 1995, and the Liberal Democrats have resolved to do so from January 1998, but the Tories have always kept their funding secret.

Mr Blair confirmed he was aware of Mr Ecclestone's pre-election donation when the men and their aides met on 16 October. He said he also believed the Formula One boss had made a firm commitment to a further payment - something Mr Ecclestone has denied. But he saw no reason not to see Mr Ecclestone. It would have been "bizarre" not to treat a party donor with the same respect accorded to others.

The Italian Prime Minister and Chancellor

Kohl of Germany had also seen the sports' representatives to argue against a European ban on tobacco sponsorship.

However, the Prime Minister did not fully quell suspicion surrounding his motives in seeking Sir Patrick's advice. Although he said he ordered the move in the morning of 6 November, before the media began to inquire about the donations, the letter was not posted until the following evening. His assertion that the letter was meant mainly to ask whether Labour should pay back the pre-election £1m, rather than seek guidance on the further donation, is only partially borne out by the text.

Last night, Downing Street published a secretary's notes of the 16 October meeting, but they served only to confirm that Mr Ecclestone and the head of the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile, Max Mosley, had threatened to take their sport abroad if the ban was imposed.

However, in a further development Richard Branson, who is advising the government on alternatives to tobacco sponsorship, has written to *The Independent* saying that if Formula One withdrew he would bring American-style Indy car racing to Britain to replace it.

The Conservative trade and industry spokesman, John Redwood, said in a separate interview that the Government should make a full statement on the issue.

"This is a story riddled with holes and this is today's version of the story. It's not an issue about party political funding. There is nothing wrong with individuals or companies giving money to parties if they like their policies or they like their principles. What would be wrong is if a party came to government and then was prepared to change its policies or its principles in order to say thank-you for donations or to receive new ones," he said.

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Branson letter, page 14
Glenda Cooper, page 15

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2/BRIEFING

COLUMN ONE

The beasts that keep an MP awake at night

Paul Tyler, the Liberal Democrat MP for North Cornwall, is an unlikely big game hunter. One could hardly picture the MP who spends his free time pottering in the garden or sailing, posing with rifle in hand and his boot resting on a dead tiger.

Yet despite assurances from government officials that wild beasts are not roaming the farmlands and national parks of Britain, Mr Tyler is demanding that the search for pumas, lynxes and cougars must continue. His suspicions have been fuelled by the mysterious savaging of five ewes while grazing on a landscaped tip in his constituency at St Austell.

Mr Tyler has been told by five Cornish councillors that they spotted a puma taking a drink from a pool in the same area while on a council coach trip last month. Planning committee chairwoman Joan Vincent said that another councillor drew her attention to the animal as they were passing clay workings near Peowitzick.

"It was drinking from a pool," said Mrs Vincent. "It was larger than an Alsatian dog. It was very dark brown, with a long tail, curved at the end. It was definitely a big animal of some kind."

Mr Tyler said this weekend: "I shall be approaching the Ministry of Agriculture on Monday to make sure the previous investigation, which I instigated three years ago, is resumed."

But while Mr Tyler would have no trouble convincing other MPs of the reality of the Rt Honorable Dennis Skinner MP, aka the Beast of Bolsover, he had less success in establishing the existence of the Beast of Bodmin (pictured, allegedly), the Beast of Cupar in Scotland and other "big cats".

Charles Wilson, a zoologist who carried out the previous government inquiry, concluded there was no evidence to show large cats were living on Bodmin Moor. Nevertheless, Mr Tyler has collected a dossier of big cat sightings and says the government inquiry "did not produce any conclusive evidence either way".

— Ian Burrell

Jonathan Powell

Following a report in Saturday's *Independent*, we have been asked by Jonathan Powell, Chief of Staff to Tony Blair, to state that Mr Powell is not a Formula One supporter, nor did he meet Bernie Ecclestone before the election. Mr Powell says he was not a "key figure" in raising the £1m donation to the Labour Party, nor was he a "key figure" in persuading the Prime Minister to exempt Formula One.

Selfridges Food Hall evening

The date of *The Independent* and Selfridges gastronomic event failed to appear in the details in the *Independent Saturday Magazine*. It will be held on 1 December at 7.30pm. We apologise for any inconvenience.

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PEOPLE



Dead girl's body discovered by her father

A 14-year-old girl found brutally murdered in a field after taking a neighbour's dog for a walk was discovered by her father, police said yesterday.

The body of music-loving Kate Bushell was found by her father, Jeremy, in the corner of a field just yards from her home in Exeter. He had gone to search for her after she failed to return home on Saturday night.

Kate had been attacked with a sharp instrument — possibly a knife — which had yet to be recovered, said Detective Superintendent Mike Stephens at a news conference in Exeter. He had not yet ruled the victim having been sexually assaulted.

Kate, a pupil at Exeter's St Thomas High School, was found dead around 300 yards from her family's detached house Burrier Drive, on the edge of a large private estate on the outskirts of the city. Police said Kate went out with the Jack Russell terrier called Gemma, belonging to neighbours who had gone away. At around 6.45pm on Saturday, she was reported missing by her father and mother Susan,

who started their own search of the area. They toured the extensive estate in their car and called in police when they failed to find her, said Det Supt Stephens.

She was found at around 7.35pm in a field off Exwick Lane near a stile by her father, who called for police assistance. The lane is around 200 yards from the family home and has steep fields on either side. Det Supt Stephens said Kate, who was wearing a turquoise kaftan and dark trousers, had been brutally murdered and a sexual attack had not been ruled out. A post mortem examination was continuing yesterday.

Det Supt Stephens appealed for anyone in the area who may have information about Kate to come forward and he also wanted to hear from people who walk their dogs or use that area. He said they also wanted information about anyone seen acting suspiciously since the murder.

"This is the murder of a young, innocent girl in a residential area. We ask for as much public assistance as possible," he said.

Planners spill the beans on Maxwell's house

It was the sort of annoying thing that could happen to anyone who was made bankrupt owing hundreds of millions of pounds.

There Kevin Maxwell was, wanting to build a tennis court in the grounds of his family's 16th Century manor house, when he found that there was a hit of a planning glitch — mainly that he didn't have permission to live there.

It was fortunate for him that, despite going down with debts of £406.5m owed to Mirror Group pensioners, he and his wife, Pandora, decided to look into building the tennis court, otherwise they

might never have found out that Moulsoford Manor, near Wallingford, Oxon, did not have planning permission to be used as a residential dwelling.

It was while making inquiries into laying the tennis court that they found out that the manor house used to be a nursing hospital and was registered for institutional use only.

According to planning minutes from South Oxfordshire District Council, Mrs Maxwell has since applied for planning permission to change the use of the manor house to residential. Today is the deadline for any-

one to lodge objections, but it is unlikely anyone will — unless any of the pensioners have already heard about the application. They were not happy with Roger Maxwell's stewardship of their funds. He raided pension schemes over and over again to prop up his crumbling business empire.

Kevin Maxwell was the signatory of a number of movements of shares from pension schemes that were never returned, but he and his brother, Ian, were cleared of fraud in January 1996. He has been discharged as a bankrupt.

— Steve Boggan

UPDATE

EQUALITY

NI Catholics still under-represented

The increasing rate of Catholics in top civil service and local government jobs in Northern Ireland must quicken, a report said today. Even though there has been a "marked improvement" in the share of Catholics holding senior grades since 1990, more progress was needed, according to study of posts in major public sector organisations Ulster's Fair Employment Commission. The overall increase in the five years since then was 4.2 per cent, but Catholics still remained under-represented among senior grades in some areas of the public sector, the report said.

They were least well represented at the most senior levels. And while the potential for change may be limited because of a continuing downward pressure on resources, the report said the FEC believed further action needed to be taken, particularly in the civil service.

SOCIETY

Night owls keep the tills ringing

One in three people — nearly 17 million of us — now go shopping at night, according to new research. Unsociable working hours mean that people are now demanding more shops and services to be available 24 hours a day.

At the moment more than one million people in the UK work between 9-11pm and around 750,000 work between 2 and 5am. It is estimated that these figures will double in the next 10 years. According to the survey carried out by Shell, which is promoting the shops at its all night garages, more than half of the population are in favour of a 24-hour society.

— Glenda Cooper



MEDIA

Violent cartoon leads to complaints

A cartoon zombie and chainsaw villain provoked a hail of complaints when they were shown on children's television. Parents were furious when ITV screened the violent animation *Reboot: To Mend And Defend* at 4.40pm.

The Independent Television Commission, has upheld the views of 19 parents who said the scenes scared their children.

Broadcaster Meridian said young children are familiar with ghoulish characters in computer games and films and that fantasy and horror often help youngsters deal with anxieties about growing up. The ITC admitted many children are familiar with such films and games, with or without their parents' consent, but the images were still not suitable for young viewers.

The ITC's decision follows the recent Broadcasting Standards Commission report on the predominance of cartoons in children's broadcasting.

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.35	Italy (lira)	2,799
Austria (schillings)	20.00	Japan (yen)	20.78
Belgium (francs)	58.79	Malta (lira)	0.63
Canada (\$)	2.33	Netherlands (guilders)	3.21
Cyprus (pounds)	0.83	Norway (kroner)	11.70
Denmark (krone)	10.89	Portugal (escudos)	288.69
France (francs)	9.52	Spain (pesetas)	239.06
Germany (marks)	2.85	Sweden (kroner)	12.47
Greece (drachmai)	451.00	Switzerland (francs)	2.32
Hong Kong (\$)	12.71	Turkey (lira)	303.200
Ireland (pounds)	1.09	USA (\$)	1.66

Source: Thomas Cook

Rates for indication purposes only

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by Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

7.30 FOR 8

by Chris Priestley



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3/YOUNG BRITAIN

THE INDEPENDENT
MONDAY
17 NOVEMBER 1997

Tomorrow belongs to us: the new generation

Today's young people are an earnest bunch. They are maturing earlier than ever into responsible self-reliant adults, according to an exhaustive survey of the next generation.

Many have grown up in broken families and have lost their parents' sense of belonging to any community. Uncertain job prospects add to their insecurity. So, lacking traditional supports, they are forced to create fresh sources of stability and safety.

This extraordinary picture of youthful seriousness emerges from a survey, called 2020 Vision, conducted over two years by the Industrial Society of 10,000 young people aged between 12 and 25. It portrays a generation bent on personal self-improvement while trying to bolster threatened institutions that offer security.

More than half want to strengthen marriage by making it harder to divorce if there are children involved.

A majority think marriage is the best living environment for men and women, against just one in six who think living with a partner is best, and one in 12 who want to live alone. A third think it should be made harder to get married.

"Marriage is important. It is a sign of stability, a foundation and that's important for children," says Jill Patton, 18, a student from Newtownards, Northern Ireland. Danny Docherty, 18, from Birkenhead, a DJ at night and volunteer youth worker by day, agrees. "It's important to have someone to come home to. Someone who cares for you like you care for them," he says.

Top of this generation's list

for higher government spending are the key departments that will keep a person healthy and prepared for work - the NHS and education. And, despite several years of falling unemployment, the majority rank unemployment as the most pressing problem in the United Kingdom today.

There is a strong work ethic with only a quarter disagreeing with the statement that "work gives meaning to life". Work is worthwhile even if unpaid, with a high level of volunteering (15 per cent of young women). As Danny Docherty says about his unpaid youth work: "I don't care about being paid. I'd rather do a job I enjoy and not be paid than make money and do something I don't enjoy. I make enough out of DJing to do the voluntary work."

BY NICOLE VEASH
AND JACK O'SULLIVAN

The most important skills are not technical or academic. Some 43 per cent say being able to get on with people is the top priority, along with being able to manage money. "You need to know what to do when you get bills through the post and where to go if you are in trouble financially or mentally," says Mr Docherty.

His generation is obsessed with getting educated and mak-

ing themselves as employable as possible. Nine out of ten say education should continue after school. And this can-do generation does not sit back when out of work: 50 per cent say that if jobless they would get more qualifications, with just a quarter waiting around for the right job. Nor do they expect a handout - better social security benefits rank tenth in their order of areas needing more

2020 Vision is co-ordinated by the Industrial Society. The Action Agenda along with full results of the research will be launched next Monday.

spending, behind public transport and leisure services.

Young Britons are also highly critical of the education system for not preparing them properly for life, with the majority (63 per cent) feeling school let them down. A third say boredom at school damaged their education.

"I'm a big believer that school doesn't teach life skills," says Karl Reza, 24, who was homeless at 17, when a family row forced him out onto the streets. Today he is setting up his own public relations company.

"You need social skills to get a job. School focuses too much on textbooks. There seems to be a belief that children are at home with Mum and Dad caring for them in the background and preparing them for life, but not everyone has perfect par-

ents. My generation is not a product of those sorts of parents. More and more young people are suffering from divorce."

The extent of isolation felt by this generation is astonishing in a country that until recently called itself Christian, prided itself on local loyalties and was infamous for its class allegiances. Just one in five feels part of a community, while only one in ten identifies with a religion or race. Two per cent see themselves as belonging to a political party, while 13 per cent feel part of a social class.

"I'm very much a creature of the planet," says Karl Reza, born in Glasgow of Mauritian parents. "I don't belong to any particular land mass. My skin is brown, but I don't feel Mauritian. I feel more British when I go abroad. I don't belong to any

religion. I'm open to the existence of anything but I don't believe in God. Some of the Buddhist philosophies I find quite palatable. I don't want to be a member of a class. I'm a person. I've never followed on political party. I'm not a believer in one though if you had to label me I would probably fall somewhere between Labour and the Liberal Democrats."

In the hostile world they inhabit, the majority have been affected by crime by the age of 19. Family background, boredom and drugs are blamed by half as the chief causes of lawlessness. For 75 per cent, particularly women, the greatest fear is physical attack. Mr Reza says: "I think it is disgusting that women can't travel at night. I know women who just can't be as free as I can be. They can't live their lives to the full."

All work and no play in the stressful Nineties

Najneen Ahmed is worried. She's worried about her degree. She's worried about not having any skills. And she's worried about the job market. At 18 she is typical of a generation who juggle their lives in true Nineties style.

"I'm not alone when I say that the pressure on us to prepare for the future is enormous," she says. "We have to think about getting good grades at school and about getting into a respectable university, then getting a job at the end of it. There is no time for anything outside of that."

Through 10,000 interviews with young people, a picture emerges of a generation plagued by traditionally adult concerns. Forget City types who burn up under excessive pressure, young people are today's stress casualties.

They live a life which is all work and no play and are often forced to give up hobbies to concentrate on their education. While many are employed in part-time work, others start laying the foundation for future careers at 14.

Like hundreds in her generation, Najneen found this pressure all too much. "During my A-levels I had a kind of nervous breakdown from the pressure of work," she says. "Now I'm having a year off before starting university just to get myself back together again."

"I have always been dedicated to my academic work and I didn't have much life outside studying for my subjects. In fact all my leisure activities were somehow related to my exams, like going to drama."

As a pupil at Dunottar, a private all-girls school in Reigate, Surrey, Najneen passed four A-levels, gaining three grade As and a B, but was still rejected by her first choice university.

"I had set my heart on going to Edinburgh University and in a way I had already planned my future, so it was very hard when I got that rejection letter. I think this contributed to my breakdown, you see I just never expected to be rejected because my academic work was very good," she says.

"It made me realise that life is a lot tougher than I expected, so I took a long hard look at my CV and came to the conclusion that it was too academic."

Najneen is now spending most of her gap year working, partly to save up money for university, partly to build up her CV to improve future work prospects.

Traditionally, the gap year between school and university was for travel and freedom. But as Jo Gardiner, campaigns director for the Industrial Society explains, the time when students went travelling to exotic parts for the hell of it is long gone.

"Gap years used to be a time for personal growth and fun," she says. "Now they are all about focusing on skills development which help young people launch themselves into the working world as successfully as possible."

"The young are like no other generation before them. They are balancing three things: education, part-time work, family and are expected to plan for their future career."

Packing adult demands into a teenage life seems to be a necessity for most. The young want to do well at school, in order to insure future job security, while earning enough money to give them sought after independence from their parents. By the age of 18, a staggering 83 per cent of young people have been employed in some kind of paid work.

David Hopes, a 15-year-old with two jobs, is just one example of this statistic. Every weekday evening is dedicated to homework and most of this weekend is spent working, with only Friday nights off for fun.

"I'm saving up for a holiday in Texas with the Scouts. I'm going to need about £700 and I don't expect my parents to pay all of it," he says.

"I don't really have much time for myself at the moment, but that is just the way things are for a lot of young people."

Every Saturday night, from five in the evening to midnight, David chops vegetables and washes dishes in a Chinese takeaway. Catering is always hectic. David has no break and only just manages time to sit down and eat his free evening meal. He takes home £20 for the night's work.

"I don't like working, but I've got no choice if I want to go on holiday," he says.

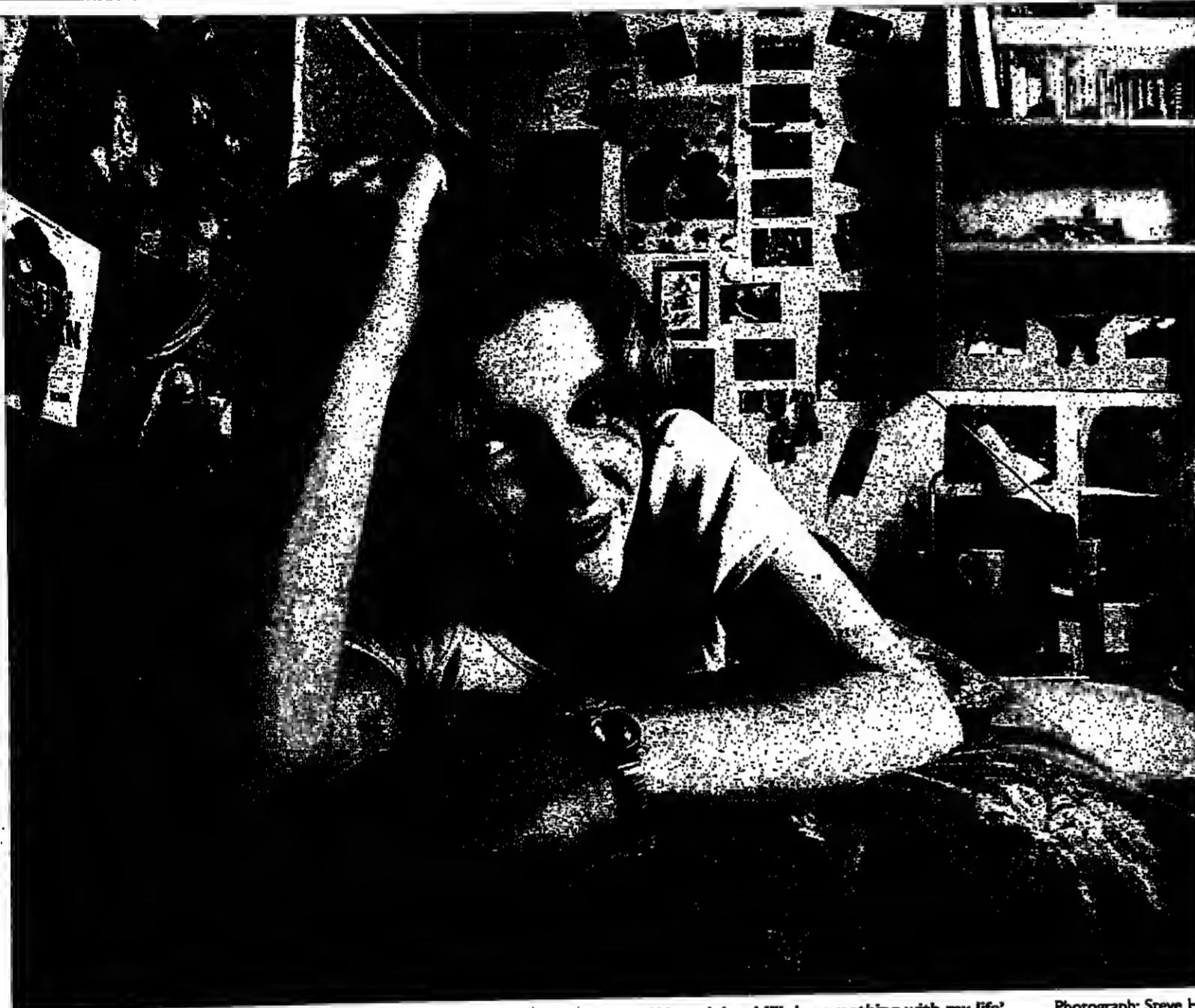
On alternate Saturday afternoons, David gives out promotional leaflets at Newtownards shopping centre in Northern Ireland, for the *Belfast Telegraph*.

"The leafleting is actually quite fun. I get £15 for three hours work, which is good pay," he says. "I don't have a lot of time to go out to the cinema or just sit at home relaxing, but I always manage to get to Scouts on Friday evenings."

Young Britons are hard grafters. From their early teens they are stuck into a mini-race, where the stakes are high. Some burn out, others manage to juggle their way through childhood.

As Najneen says: "We have to give up our leisure time to plan for the future. That is just the way young people think these days. You have to juggle all sorts of things at the same time. That is the definition of success."

— Nicole Veash and Jack O'Sullivan



Chloe Beattie at Keele University: "Most young people I know are optimistic. If I work hard I'll do something with my life." Photograph: Steve Hill

'Everyone needs to feel secure, to have some stability'

Chloe Beattie, 19, of Workington, Cumbria, is in the first year of an English and art degree at Keele University.

"I've always done part-time work from an early age. When I was 16, I was doing the tills in Marks & Spencer and during my A-levels I did some waitressing. Most summer holidays I worked in a factory."

"People said I shouldn't do a part-time job when I was studying because they thought it would be hard to combine

with the amount of homework I got. But I needed the money and you can always find a way of fitting everything in."

"Apart from my job and studying for my exams, I had to decide what to do in the future. It was all very stressful because I was worried about making the wrong choice. I was bogged down with everything and didn't have much time to think."

"In the end things didn't turn out very well. I took an art foundation course at a local college, but dropped out because it wasn't right for me."

"I ended up having a year out. I didn't go travelling or any-

thing, but I went to live in London, which was a long way from home."

"I got a job in an office which gave me invaluable experience and turned out to be the best thing. I got the chance to learn things about the working environment which I would never have known if I had gone straight to university. Plus I've got real work experience, which is really important in today's job market."

"Now when I leave Keele I won't fall into the trap of having a degree but no experience. I definitely made the right choice about not going travelling."

"Most young people I know are optimistic. I don't go around saying I'll never get a job. I know the job market is insecure but you can't just give in. If I carry on working hard I'll get a job and do something with my life."



New faces tackle old questions of childcare, jobs and commitment

THE ATHLETE:
Jamie Baulch, 24, is a 400-metre runner. He was part of the 4x400m British relay team which won the silver medal in the 1996 Olympics.

"Young men definitely want to play a bigger role in child care. I've got a baby boy, who is two, and I'm really into that whole family package."

"I love playing a role in family life and sharing responsibilities is what it's all about."

"I do my fair share of domestic chores. I like staying in and looking after the children or doing the cleaning. It's definitely different from the past."

"A lot of people who are older than me say it's not my job to look after the baby. Not only do I think it is, I also love doing it."

THE POLITICIAN:
Claire Ward, 25, Labour MP for Watford, is the youngest woman in the Commons.

"Most young people grow up with a sense of hard work. Twenty or 30 years ago you could always find a job and someone going to university would be guaranteed employment at the end of their degree."

"Today's young people don't have that blasé approach that our parents had about the job market. We know that employers are looking for everything. They want more than just qualifications, they want life experience and practical skills. If you do take a gap year and go travelling that's great, but it is not going to give employers what they want."

"The pressure is definitely on young people to do better in every aspect of their life."

THE FOOTBALLER:
Craig Burley, 26, is a midfielder who joined Celtic from Chelsea for £2.5m. He also plays for Scotland.

"I found it difficult at school because I concentrated on football so much. I've been lucky because this has paid off and I'm able to earn a living but some of my friends weren't so fortunate. Later on I might regret not getting a better education, but it's all right for now."

"Older generations always think the young are layabouts but that is really not the case any more. Everyone I know in the sporting field is really hard-working."

"If you are not responsible and committed to your game you are never going to get on. Everything needs to be done with 100 per cent effort otherwise you lose the edge."



Jamie Baulch, athlete: "It's different from the past"



Claire Wood, MP: "The pressure is on young people"

Whatever you think about foxes, you have to admire their guts.

Most huntsmen will tell you that the death of a fox is swift and painless.

"A quick nip in the back of the neck," they say, "and he's dead."

If only.

Foxhounds tend to go for the softer option.

The belly.

This brings the fox down, but doesn't immediately kill it.

Death usually occurs by disembowelment.

There are those who would argue that this is no more than a fox deserves.

After all, they say, foxes are themselves killers and need to be controlled.

Whilst it's true that foxes do occasionally take lambs, many of these are likely to be already dead.

(20% of lambs born each year die from hypothermia, malnutrition or disease, or are

stillborn.) And the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food estimates the number of lambs taken by foxes to be not significant.

The notion that hunting is necessary to control the fox population is equally unfounded.

At least 200,000 foxes are killed every year by shooting, snaring or in road accidents. Only about 15,000 are killed by hunting.



on November 28th.

A MORI poll taken in October this year shows that 73% of people support the Bill.

We want to turn that overwhelming weight of public opinion into legislation.

November 28th is a Friday when many MPs will be back in their constituencies.

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You can write to your MP direct at the House of Commons.

Or call the RSPCA on 01403 223 284 (9am-5pm weekdays) and we'll send you a campaign pack.

Foxhunting is cruel and unnecessary.

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RSPCA

Ban hunting with dogs.

THE AIMS OF THE RSPCA ARE TO PREVENT CRUELTY AND PROMOTE KINDNESS TO ANIMALS.

US has second thoughts as allies reject force

Washington appeared to be backing away from a military strike against Iraq yesterday. Mary Dejean in Washington says the cooling of American rhetoric came amid mounting evidence that international support for military action was lacking.

The US military build-up in the Gulf continued yesterday, with the dispatch of a second aircraft carrier, the *George Washington*, and more fighter planes, but the emphasis of US statements moved conspicuously away from warmongery, as most of Washington's Gulf War allies made clear their reluctance to support military action against Iraq.

Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, slipped a series of additional stops – Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait – into her whistle-stop Middle East tour. But she had to leave even Kuwait with no support for the use of armed force against its former invader.

On television talkshows, US administration officials em-



Tariq Aziz being protected by a bodyguard yesterday in Paris, where he was en route from the UN in New York. Photograph: AFP

IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT

EYE

Nigel Planer: how I went to jail for my part in Chicago



Tariq Aziz, the Iraqi deputy prime minister, who spent last week trying to present Baghdad's view at the UN, was still in Paris yesterday, reportedly preparing for a North African tour to drum up support.

US commentators are also warning of the likely diplomatic fall-out if the US uses force unilaterally. While opinion polls show public support for military action, the retired Gulf War general Norman Schwarzkopf warned that what the US was trying to achieve in the current conflict was difficult to obtain.

If 43 days of saturation bombing had failed to persuade Saddam Hussein to change his mind in 1991, there was no reason why he would submit as a result of military action now. This time, it was not simply a question of punishing the Iraqi leader, but of trying to get him to allow Americans back into UN weapons inspections teams. To this, Gen Schwarzkopf warned, a military strike could be counterproductive.

ARTS

Tom Lubbock gets away with the fairies at the Royal Academy

NETWORK+
Ralph Nader's crusade against Bill Gates

SCHOOL LEAGUE TABLES
Those GCSE ratings in full

Albright's rhetoric fails to overcome Arab feelings of betrayal over Israel

Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, went straight to the point – unwittingly – when she addressed the largely boycotted Arab-Israeli economic conference in Qatar yesterday.

"Saddam Hussein has lied, delayed, obstructed and tried to deceive," she told delegations from Israel and from just six Arab states. But that is exactly how the leaders of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Syria, Lebanon and other absentees

would have described Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's adherence to the Middle East "peace process".

Mrs Albright, who truncated her visit to Qatar for a vain mission to persuade the Saudis, Kuwaitis and Bahrainis to join America's latest crusade against Saddam, also lectured the Arabs on their refusal to talk to the Israelis in Qatar. "The effort to increase regional economic co-operation is not, as

some people seem to feel, a favour to any particular nation." The Arabs disagree. They see Mrs Albright as fronting Israel's own policies in the Middle East and America as acting as Israel's spokesman in the region.

The irony is both deep and wounding for Washington. President Bill Clinton wants to talk tough and threaten Saddam Hussein for breaking international rules – compliance with UN resolutions on weapons of

mass destruction – while refusing to talk tough to an Israeli leader who is refusing to withdraw his troops from occupied Arab land – compliance with UN Security Council resolution 242 – and is refusing the Palestinians a state and a capital in Jerusalem. As the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* put it on Saturday, Saddam Hussein's timing is brilliant: "It makes it hard for any Arab nation to ally itself to Washington."

For once, it seems, Saddam has acted with great shrewdness, challenging Washington at the very moment when the Arabs feel deeply betrayed by the United States over the destruction of the Arab-Israeli "peace process".

Egypt, which owes its liberation from the odious Saddam to America, has condemned the idea of military action against Iraq. Many Kuwaitis are related to Iraqi families and the suffering

of Iraqi civilians now dominates the headlines of the Arab press. And not without reason.

While children die in Iraq of poor food or lack of medical attention, the Arabs are told that further punishment must be inflicted on them to bring down the dictatorship of a man whose military power was originally augmented by American and European weapons. If President George Bush and Secretary of State James Baker could once

hold an Arab alliance against Iraq together, this heritage has been squandered by President Clinton's weakness in the face of Mr Netanyahu.

The emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad al-Khalifa al-Thani, opened the economic conference with a fierce attack against Israel – and thus, by extension, America. Not since 1967 has Washington's stock fallen so low in the Arab world.

— Robert Fisk



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6/POLITICS & FUNDING

Buoyant economy gives Brown cash to play with

The rapid fall in unemployment during the summer has delivered a £1bn windfall to government coffers. Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, considers how Gordon Brown might spend it.

The number of people claiming benefit is already a quarter of a million lower than at the time of Gordon Brown's July Budget, and the drop in joblessness will allow him to present a much brighter outlook for the public finances in his "pre-Budget" statement to the House of Commons next week.

The Chancellor will be able to announce a reduction in his targets for government borrowing, or – if he wishes – find some extra money for the hard-pressed National Health Service this winter.

The Treasury is keen to downplay, for now, the scope for increased spending in order to keep the lid on bids from the spending departments. Mr Brown has pledged to stick to the public spending total for this year and next, set by his Conservative predecessor.

However, he has already

found extra funds for health and education. In July, he cut the "contingency reserve" – the money in the spending plans not earmarked for particular departments – by £2.2bn, dividing the money between health and education. Last month the defence budget was raided to fund a cash injection for NHS.

In addition, the National Register of Assets due to be unveiled this week has revealed a wide range of government properties that will be sold to raise money for high-priority public services.

As well as national treasures like valuable works of art, the survey has uncovered land and buildings that will be sold off during the next few years.

The strength of the economy since Labour came to power means that almost all City commentators expect the Chancellor to be able to better his £1bn target for the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement in the current year by £2bn or more.

Lower unemployment, tough spending control and higher tax revenues have contributed to this performance.

David Owen, an economist at investment bank Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, said: "The public finances are in better shape than anybody expected a few months ago, although they

will stop improving as the economy slows next year."

Even if the Treasury decides to be cautious about its forecast for future tax receipts, the convention of assuming that unemployment will stay at a constant level will give Mr Brown £1bn leeway compared with July. Although, formally, spending on benefits for the jobless is counted outside the expenditure planning total, the saving on social security payments could be spent without breaking the pledge on sticking to the planning total by releasing more money from the reserve.

The "pre-Budget" statement next week is intended to set out the background for decisions to be announced in the Budget proper in March, and will not include a new set of public spending plans. However, it will set out the Treasury's updated forecasts for the economy and the state of the Government's finances.

Few observers believe the Chancellor will not take the opportunity to make a popular announcement on extra funding for health and education, just as he did in July. That Budget was also hailed as excluding public spending, allowing Mr Brown to pull a rabbit from his hat on the day.



Realising assets: Ministry of Defence land could be sold to raise money for high-priority public services

Photograph: Christopher Jones

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The growing popularity and use of CD-Roms have made them the latest target for the type of criminals who once robbed banks.

In 50 reports that Microsoft, the manufacturer of the most popular packages, have become the 150m victims of the largest break-in to date.

British nurs
spared beha

Workers to be compensated for Tory disregard of European law

Public-sector workers were denied key rights under European law for nearly a decade and will now be able to claim compensation, the Government will concede today.

Ministers have decided that previous Conservative administrations, largely under Margaret Thatcher, ignored their obligations to ensure that working conditions were protected when private businesses took over public services under the Compulsory Competitive Tendering policy.

Tens of thousands of workers lost their jobs and others saw their wages cut in the period between 1983 and 1993.

Unions yesterday greeted the decision as a significant breakthrough and will launch fresh proceedings on behalf of some 1,500 health and local government workers claiming "thousands of pounds each". Exact amounts are not yet available, but it will cost the government several million pounds.

Other compensation cases may also be brought, but some union officials are pessimistic about their chances of success.

Roger Poole, assistant general secretary of the public-service union Unison, said the real significance of the case was that it proved governments could not flout European law and escape the consequences. And he added: "The new government has been lumbered with a Tory legacy of illegality. This landmark ruling will be a posthumous page in the last government's book of injustice."

Jack Dromey, national secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, said Conservative governments had deliberately broken the law. "They wanted to promote a Dutch auction of who would pay the least in the privatisation of public services."

Mick Graham, national secretary of GMB general union, said the ruling would show that the Conservatives had failed business as well as union members by giving misleading advice.

"I hope that contractors who have been taken through legal proceedings on the basis of the Tories' guidance now sue the party for bad faith."

Under the British version of European law, only private sector workers in commercial undertakings were protected. However, the European directives on which the UK law – the transfer of undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations 1981 – was based, protected all workers.

—Barrie Clement, Labour Editor

Supermarket
bomber may
be on film

Professional thieves turn to computer software

The growing popularity and high value of CD-Roms have made them the latest target for the type of criminals who once robbed banks.

Ian Burrell reports that Microsoft, the manufacturer of the most sought-after packages, have become the £30m victims of the biggest heist to date.

The two security guards on duty at a printing firm in an industrial estate in a small Scottish town could have been excused for anticipating a quiet Sunday night's shift.

But shortly before 11pm, a gunman and three other masked associates burst onto the premises of M & A Thomson Litho in East Kilbride. The terrified guards were tied up as the robbers, who knew exactly what they wanted, loaded up one of the com-

pany's own vans. They filled it with more than 100,000 CD-Roms, including popular titles like the encyclopaedia package *Encarta* and *Office 97*, a desktop publishing program. They also took more than 200,000 certificates which were intended as proof that the software was legal.

The gang escaped with a haul worth nearly £10m, but with lost sales the raid could cost the company £30m.

It was nearly five hours before the two security guards broke free to raise the alarm, unbent but traumatised by their experience, eight days ago. But it was nearly a week before Microsoft, which owned the stolen material and had contracted the Scottish company to help package the software, decided to go public on the significance of the crime.

David Gregory, Microsoft's anti-piracy manager, issued a statement from the company's British headquarters in Reading, Berkshire, saying that the gang had been "well-orchestrated" and offering a "substantial reward" for information leading to their arrest.

He said: "Software theft is an increasingly serious issue involving well organised criminal gangs. Software theft defrauds the customer, who ends up with counterfeit or stolen goods which are not what they claim to be."

Microsoft believes that the team of robbers probably operates a sophisticated network of distribution with outlets all over the world.

Tony Collins, executive editor of *Computer Weekly* magazine, said the company had every reason to be concerned and said the raid was a "worrying development".

Mr Collins said that the demand for popular Microsoft packages like *Encarta* was unrivalled by other manufacturers, but the price of around £400 for a relatively small product made them a perfect target for thieves. The CD-Roms cost only around £5 to manufacture.



Child's play: Vietnamese doll by Gotz (price £700) on Mary Shortle's stall at the London International Toy and Doll Fair, Kensington, yesterday. Photograph: Nicola Kurz

Blast of warm air is set to break record

As November temperatures soared to an unseasonal mid-18C, weather experts were last night waiting to see if a 100-year-old record will be broken.

Checks at a weather station in Aultbea in Wester Ross, in the north-west of Scotland, revealed a remarkably mild 18.5C (65.3F) at 6am. Forecasters are now waiting to see if the day's highest temperature of the day will break the 18.7C recorded at Addington in Surrey in November 1895.

The average temperature for this time of year ranges from 7C in the north of Scotland to 10-15C on the south coast of England. The mild weather is caused by a blast of warm air sweeping across the Atlantic from hotspots such as the Azores and Bermuda. Weather forecasters expect it to continue well into next week.

British nurses spared beheading

The threat of public beheading has been finally lifted from both British nurses accused of murder in Saudi Arabia. After seven weeks of legal wrangling, the brother of the alleged victim will now be paid £730,000 in "blood money". The women could be home before the millennium.

Frank Gifford, brother of the dead nurse Yvonne Gifford, was accused of piling on the agony yesterday after his lawyers went right to the deadline for filing a petition to waive the death penalty for Deborah Parry and Lucille McLaughlin. Mr Gifford had until today to submit his waiver to the Saudi Sharia court, and he waited until the last possible moment to do it.

Inside Dammam Central Prison, Ms Parry, 38, will have heaved the greatest sigh of relief because she has still to hear the verdict against her. But now she knows that a public beheading cannot take place. Ms McLaughlin has already been sentenced to eight years in prison and 500 lashes.

Mr Gifford, 59, agreed to the waiver weeks ago in return for \$1.2m (£730,000), most of which will pay for a hospital facility in his sister's name. She was stabbed, beaten and suffocated in her room at the King Fahd Military Medical Centre in Dhahran last December. Ms Parry and Ms McLaughlin deny killing her, arguing that confessions - which form the mainstay of the prosecution evidence - were extracted under the threat of sexual and physical violence.

Mr Gifford's lawyers had promised to lodge the waiver twice before - on 22 October and 10 November - but each time they pulled back after disputes with the nurse's Saudi lawyer, Salah Hejailan. Both sides blamed each other for the time taken to finalise the process but Jonathan Ashbee, Ms Parry's brother in law, said: "The deadline was 17 October; I don't think it's any coincidence that he left it until 16 October to lodge the waiver with the court."

"I think he had a fear that the girls would be let off lightly, so he wanted to pile on the agony as long as he could. The pressure on them has been enormous, particularly for Debbie not knowing the verdict against her. The most important thing now is that we clear their names - they are innocent, so even one day in jail is one too many."

Informed legal sources in Saudi Arabia believe the Appeal Court could reduce Ms McLaughlin's sentence to three years and expect Ms Parry to be given no more than four years. It is expected that neither woman will now face the lash and both could be sent home to complete their sentences in England, possibly being freed by 2000.

Mr Gifford is expected to receive his money within days. He says he will take only about £50,000 after expenses.

— Steve Boggan

Supermarket bomber may be on film

Detectives are hoping that security cameras may have filmed the "Mardi Gras" bomber during his latest attacks on the Sainsbury's supermarket chain.

Hours of videotapes were being examined yesterday in the hope that they may reveal the identity of the man who planted incendiary bombs at three London stores on Saturday.

One man was slightly injured and a store worker was treated for shock after two of the devices, at Greenford and West Ealing, burst into flames. A third bomb at Sainsbury's in Ruislip was defused by police.

The Mardi Gras bomber - so-called because the devices included a message bearing the words "welcome to the Mardi Gras experience" - first struck in December 1994, when his attentions were directed at Barclays Bank. More than 20 devices were targeted at Barclays until July 1996, when he began threatening Sainsbury's.

— Steve Boggan

Channel tunnel safety measures are still causing concern one year on from the devastating freight shuttle train fire after which 30 lorry drivers needed hospital treatment, the Consumers' Association said yesterday.

The tunnel operator, Eurotunnel, has introduced additional measures and altered procedures following the fire on 18 November 1996. But the CA said that it was still worried about open-sided freight carriages, evacuation procedures and the non-segregation of passengers from cars on the shuttle trains.

Eurotunnel said it was confident the steps it had taken made the tunnel "even safer than it was before the fire". In May 1997, an official report from the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority made 36 recommendations after saying the fire had exposed "fundamental weaknesses" in safety systems. Yesterday, Eurotunnel said that most of the recommendations had been implemented.

Three share lottery £10m

Last night's National Lottery jackpot of £10m is to be shared by three ticket-holders. The winning numbers were 14, 11, 32, 35, 34 and 23, bonus number 41. A further 38 players who got five numbers correct plus the bonus ball, will each pick up £74,000.

769 0066

Britain battles to block new EU currency council

Faced with marginalisation in Europe, Britain will fight today to block plans for an 'economic government' which excludes countries not taking part in the single currency at its launch in 1999. Katherine Butler in Brussels says the Chancellor will challenge France and Germany but may find himself reduced to arguing about who pays for the sandwiches.

Ministers from Britain, Sweden, Denmark and Greece, all of whom are likely to remain outside the Euro-zone in 1999, are challenging proposals to set up a new body, which is being reserved exclusively for finance ministers of governments taking part in Economic and Monetary Union from the start.

Known as "Euro-X", the X standing for the precise number of "ins", the terms of reference for the new council have already been bilaterally agreed between the French and Germans. They will be debated by the 15 EU finance ministers for the first time today when they meet in Brussels.

At the meeting, the Chancellor Gordon Brown will argue strenuously that the regular monthly meetings of all 15 EU finance ministers, which are known as "Ecofin", ought to remain the only decision-making body on economic policy under the terms of the European Union treaty.

Denmark and Sweden, which have signalled they will also opt out of EMU in 1999, will also protest today to being excluded from the new body, because it could take decisions having a direct effect on the economics of the "outs".

The difficulty faced by the so-called "outs" (who insist they ought to be called "pre-ins" because they say they do want to join at a later date), is that they cannot legally veto a decision by a group of EU governments to hold informal meetings outside the framework of the normal EU institutions. Such informal contacts already take place on a regular basis on a wide range of subjects.

Although the new body is "informal" in theory, and has no binding effect, the

big fear about the new élite EMU grouping is that it will "pre-cook" crucial decisions on matters ranging from exchange rate policy, budgets and taxation, to employment and labour strategies before referring them to Ecofin for rubber stamping.

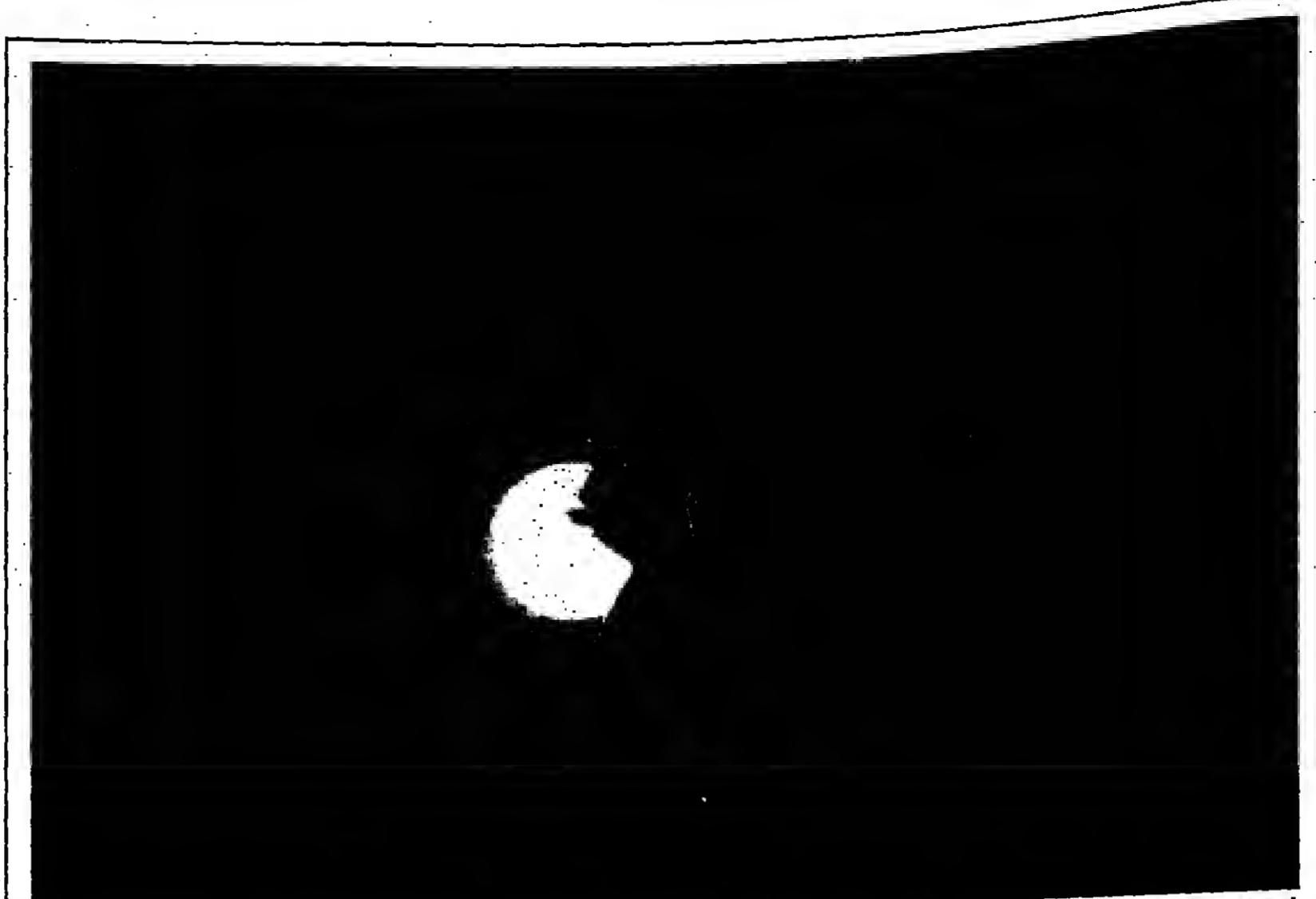
British officials hinted at the weekend that the Government's strategy might be to prevent the use of official EU meeting rooms, complete with heat, light and interpretation facilities, or EU catering facilities, by any informal grouping which excludes certain member states. "I don't see how they could call on the delicious coffee and excellent sandwiches or any other facility paid for out of the EU budget," said a senior British official.

Bonn has indicated it wants the new "council" to be formed on an inter-governmental basis which would not alter the status of Ecofin's monthly meetings. If the Euro-X is indeed this informal, in legal terms, then Mr Brown seems powerless to do anything other than make life difficult by ordering his "in" colleagues to take themselves off to a local hotel for their monthly talks.

Behind the scenes Britain has unsuccessfully been lobbying for observer status on the Euro-X. French officials repeated at the weekend that they believe giving the "outs" even an observer seat is "out of the question". It would be "absurd" and impracticable.

But the French also admit they want a "legal framework" for the Euro-X to be agreed by EU heads of government in December. This would obviously require British agreement. Gordon Brown's glimmer of hope must be that to overcome a British veto, some form of "bridging mechanism" which would allow him to claim the Government is not being shut out completely, could eventually emerge as the compromise.

Britain may also try to take advantage of the fears of some of the smaller "in" governments who are lobbying to have the European Commission officially represented on the Euro-X. Some believe that Commission involvement would balance the domination of the French and Germans but Bonn and Paris are anxious to see this limited to ad hoc attendance by EU commissioners.



Desert night: A nomad offering his camels food at the Pushkar cattle fair in the Indian desert state of Rajasthan. The fair at the weekend attracted nearly 50,000 people to buy and sell camels and celebrate the full moon

Photograph: Reuters/Kamal Kishore

Hungarians vote on Nato

Hungary's government yesterday said it was confident of a positive outcome to a referendum on Nato membership.

The referendum will be valid if half the 8 million eligible voters show up, or there are at least 2 million votes for or against Nato membership. The highest turnout was in Budapest, with almost 41 per cent. Opinion polls found a substantial majority of Hungarians in favour of joining Nato in a first round of expansion of the Western military alliance in 1999.

— Reuters, Budapest

South Africa's big firms oppose tax on past profits

South African companies are being asked to pay for the past in the form of a wealth tax or training levy, following a three-day hearing at which business was called to account for its part in apartheid.

If the special Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings — marked by a disappointing stream of qualified apologies from the corporate sector — are anything to go by, few businesses are likely to throw open willingly their coffers. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, TRC chairman, opened the hearings by singling out the Shell and BP oil companies for criticism because they failed to make individual submissions. "No one today admits to supporting apartheid," said the archbishop. Trade union leader Sam Shilowa wryly said, it seemed everyone was a freedom fighter now.

The biggest corporations insisted they had long opposed apartheid, although some admitted they had not always done all they could. Some, like Anglo American and the Chamber of Mines, even suggested that business had been an apartheid victim, as the system reduced growth rates and barred South African companies from the international market.

Johan Rupert, son of Anton Rupert, founder of Rembrandt, the largest Afrikaner business group, said he failed to understand how his company had benefited from apartheid.

At the end of the hearings

Koosum Kalyan, Shell SA's general manager, said no one from Shell had testified at the TRC hearings in Johannesburg because they were not invited to do so.

The archbishop's public criticism suggests behind-the-scenes tensions between the Commission and the oil multinationals, but Ms Kalyan said Shell had told it could still lodge a written submission before 16 December and discussions with the TRC were ongoing.

Ms Kalyan said that while Shell was already heavily involved in South Africa's transformation, the company would consider contributing to a special reparations fund for apartheid victims.

Since President Nelson Mandela took power an informal system of compensation has been in operation. The President, who has made friends with white business leaders, regularly invites corporate giants to fund and build clinics and schools bearing their names. It would be a shortsighted captain of industry who turned down the opportunity of speedy rehabilitation.

But newspaper editors, academics and trade unionists are asking for a more systematic approach to compensation.

Sampie Terreblanche, an economist at the Afrikaans University, Stellenbosch, is suggesting a wealth tax be levied on individuals with assets exceeding R2m (£250,000).

— Mary Braid

Boutros-Ghali elected head of Francophone nations

Boutros Boutros-Ghali was elected head of *La Francophonie*, the French-speaking nations, yesterday. Mr Boutros-Ghali was approved unanimously to the newly created position of secretary-general of the 49-member grouping, which is seen by many as a guardian against domination by the Anglo-Saxon language and influences. He stepped down as United Nations secretary-general at the end of his term last year after the United States made it clear it would not support him for a further term of office.

— Reuters, Hanover

Holocaust award

The Holocaust survivor Riva Sifer (left), from Latvia, will tomorrow become the first person to receive compensation from the Swiss Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust and World Jewish Restitution Organisation.

Nazi gold, page 15
— Reuters, Riga

Communist leader dies

Georges Marchais, Stalinist leader of the French Communist Party for 22 years, died in a Paris hospital yesterday, aged 77. He had a long history of heart disease. When Mr Marchais became leader of the PCF in 1972, it was France's biggest opposition party, winning one out of every four votes in national elections. By the time he stepped down in January 1994, its share had fallen to 7 per cent as the Soviet communism that had inspired Marchais was swamped.

Obituary, page 16
— Reuters, Paris

New name, same regime

Burma's new military regime has a friendlier name, but will the leaders change in their deeds? On Saturday, Burma's four top generals announced they had dissolved the State Law and Order Restoration Council and replaced it with the State Peace and Development Council. "We hope there is a change of heart and thinking also, but it is too early to make a judgement," said Tin Oo, vice-chairman of the National League for Democracy, the party of which Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi is also a top official.

— AP, Rangoon

Italy fears for the life of its great eccentric



He is Italy's best-known social campaigner. But now Marco Pannella (right) may be fighting his last battle.

Undaunted by a stroke a week ago, he has gone on hunger strike to protest at his lack of exposure on the Italian media. Andrew Gumbel in Rome explains the extraordinary response to Mr Pannella's gamble with his health.

Marco Pannella is a man who has long devoted body and soul to political causes. In the Seventies, his Radical Party forced divorce and abortion onto the Italian statute books. More recently he has willingly allowed himself to be stung in jail for distributing hashish on the streets, all in the name of decriminalising the market in soft drugs.

Party leader after party leader, the establishment has spent the weekend begging him to give up his gesture. The Prime Minister, Romano Prodi, phoned him on Saturday and even acknowledged he was right

to call referendums by public acclaim and so bypass an efficient and corrupt parliament. Since the early Seventies he has been gathering hundreds of thousands of signatures to force plebiscites on everything from divorce and abortion to hunting, shooting and fishing.

He lost his edge in the 1987 general elections, when he allowed the pornography actress La Cicciolina to run on his party's list as a way of illustrating the bankruptcy of Italian democracy. La Cicciolina was elected, and proceeded to embarrass everyone — Mr Pannella included — by stripping in public at every opportunity.

In recent years, Mr Pannella has called so many referendums — many of them abstruse and incomprehensible — that the tactic has outlived its usefulness. Despite waning support, his knack for arresting campaigns has continued: in the last few weeks he has taken to the streets to distribute both marijuana and big banknotes — the latter a protest against the big state subsidies enjoyed by political parties, including his own.

peking
fearless
free at

China's best-known
resident arrived in the
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jail on health grounds
and sent into exile.
Perry, in Peking, says the
Chinese government is
quickly using its
political prisoners as
diplomatic bargaining
tools.

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DIRECT LINE	9.0%	£1,000

*Mortgage example based on £100,000 over 25 years at 9.0% APR.

APRs based on Standard Variable Rate Representative.

MIRAS has been calculated at 10.0%.

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to say he was being ignored by the major television networks. The chairman of the parliamentary media commission invited him to make his feelings formally known this morning — preferably on a full stomach. But Mr Pannella has decided that he will not be fobbed off. Heartened by the reaction to his protest, he has agreed to continue taking liquids and even checked himself into hospital to have his metabolism monitored. But no food has passed his lips since midnight on Friday. And 300 diehard supporters have since joined his hunger strike in sympathy.

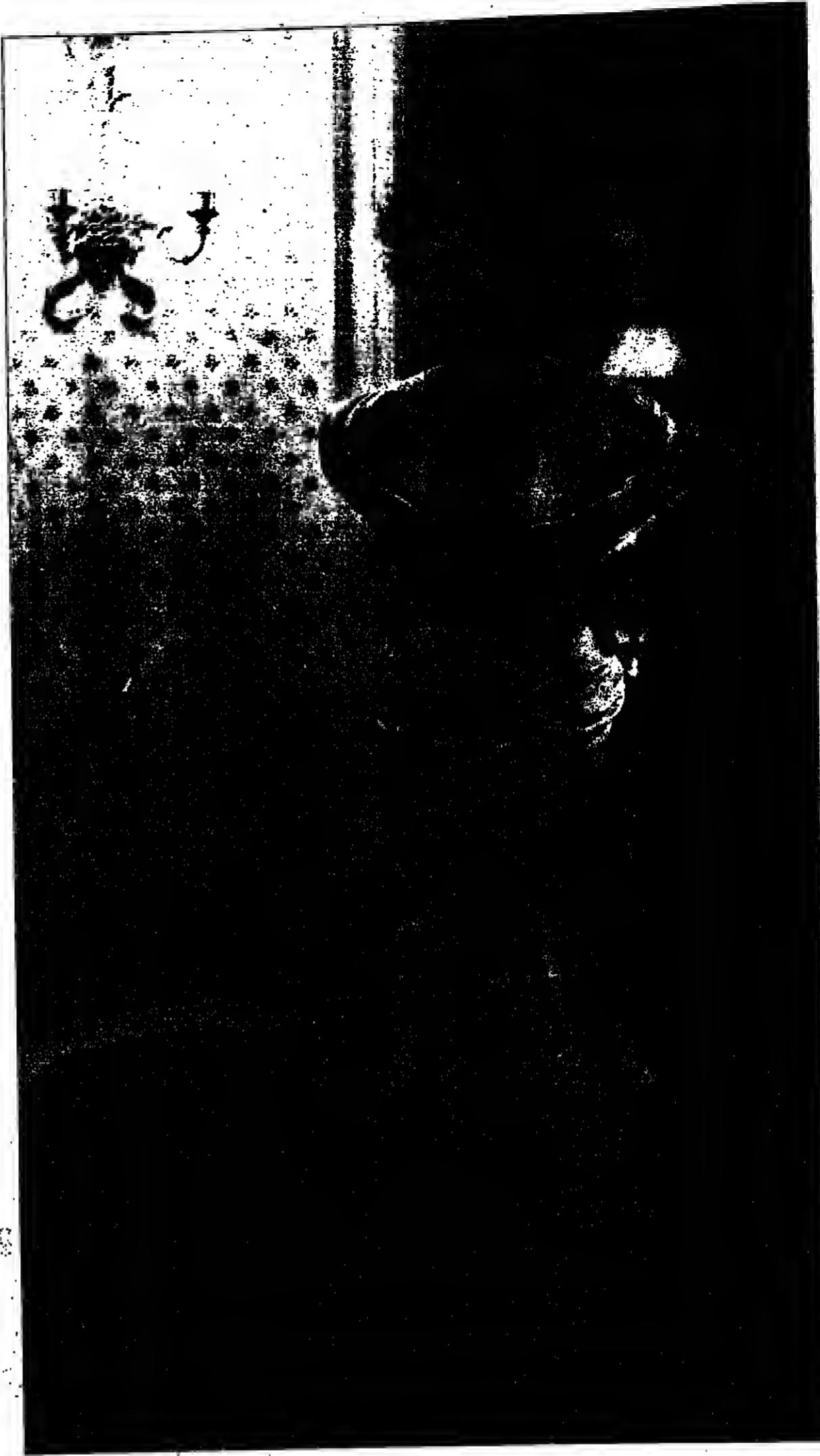
In a country of molly-coddled politicians and largely molly-coddled voters, Mr Pannella's willingness to take real risks comes as a breath of fresh air. Whether his own media exposure is an issue worth gambling his life for is another matter. As the canny old man of post-war Christian Democracy, Giulio Andreotti, wrote to him over the weekend: "You can't run many campaigns when you are dead."

Mr Pannella's big political innovation was to exploit the fine print of the Italian constitution

11/FASHION



Helena Bonham Carter arrives at the Dorchester to be made into a movie star for the night



How to become a movie star in six (not so) easy steps

Helena Bonham Carter
wanted to look the part for the London premiere of her new film 'The Wings of the Dove' on Wednesday. **Tamsin Blanchard** watched the transformation. **Photographs by Jillian Edelstein**

4pm The Dorchester Hotel. Helena Bonham Carter, movie star and street urchin, is swishing water from a bottle of Evian, wandering from room to room in the palatial suite that is to be her dressing-room for the evening. She is wearing a pair of baggy trousers held on to her tiny frame by braces, an old jersey top and a pair of grubby white trainers. Her hair

is sticking up all over the place and her finely-boned porcelain-pale face is without a single trace of make-up. She smokes in between mouthfuls of water. "Let's see if it fits before we start," says Helena, stripping down to practical big knickers and a grey Calvin Klein sportsbra. She unzips the pink-edged clothes hanging bag to reveal a candy-pink taffeta corset top

and long fish-tail skirt made specially for the star's London Film Festival premiere of her new film, *The Wings of the Dove*. Across the gold Vivienne Westwood label is another narrow label with the word "special" embroidered in gold thread.

Westwood's business in providing celebrities with gowns to wear to one-off events is growing.

She dressed Elizabeth Shue for *Leaving Las Vegas*, and made another pink confection for Kate Winslet to wear to the Academy Awards earlier in the year.

Helena is tiny, but despite a fitting two days earlier, the skirt and top are even smaller. The dress was made in just 48 hours. It looks as though some good old-fashioned knee-in-the-small-of-the-back techniques are in order. But then Helena is used to being squeezed into corsets. She is also used to being dressed completely out of keeping with her own character. Her personal style is famously scruffy. She usually wears just "a bit of make-up with some zit cover-up", and is more interested in comfort than fashion.

Tonight she has just another role to play: "I'm dressing up and pretending to be a movie star," she says. Her comfy clothes will be stuffed into a plastic bag until the morning. The dress, with its décolletage neckline, impossibly small waist and Marilyn style fish-tail skirt with ruffles of glittery net underskirt is pure Hollywood glamour and just the thing. "I'm not innately glamorous. If it was left up to me, I would never choose to wear a dress like this. But this is fantasy time."

4.50pm Make-up artist Louise Constad sets to work while Helena smokes another cigarette. Constad is a make-up artist to the stars and has covered spots and brushed powder on almost any celebrity you can name, from Faye Dunaway to Tina Turner.

"What a palaver," laughs Helena at the prospect of three hours of primping and preening. She might as well be back on the set of a movie, where she spends lots of time with make-up artists. "You both have to share a sense of humour and a taste in music because you

have to spend a lot of time together – I like show tunes," she says. For *Wings*, Helena spent a total of 10 weeks between hair and make-up filming in London and Venice, where she spent most of the time feeling seasick from too many takes in a moonlit gondola.

Slowly, Helena's public face takes shape. Her eyes are dusted with dark blue shadow and a touch of sparkly glitter and her eyelashes grow thicker and longer with each wave of the mascara wand.

5.55pm "She's not a hairdresser at all; she's going to make a dress now," Helena's regular hairdresser Carol Hemmings is rummaging in a dressing-up box full of velvet flowers, threads of beads, feathers and ribbons. She pulls out a length of pink velvet ribbon, some seed pearls and a needle and thread.

She then sets to work sewing short pieces of hair into Helena's own hair. It looks painful. "All that long hair I'm supposed to have, it's actually in Carol's box," says Helena, blue varnish being applied to her nails. The hair-pieces are trimmed to fit in with Helena's own and the tiny pearls are threaded on to single strands.

6.15pm "Hello my angel!" Helena's innately glamorous silver-haired mum, Elena, arrives to escort her to the première. She's already seen the film twice. She is dressed in a plum taffeta jacket and skirt made to her own design. Underneath, she is wearing a white ruffled blouse she picked up in Madrid. The suit, she says, is an old faithful. She has worn it to many a première.

7.40pm Hair and make-up done, it's time to get dressed. Helena breathes her last free breath for the night and the zip is forced closed. As she looks in the mirror and sees Helena the movie star, there is a ping. "I think something's gone," she cringes. "It might be your vertebrae," jokes Louise. The zip has broken but, thankfully, the buttons hold the corset together. Mum takes a needle and thread just in case and they step out into the cold night, the autograph hunters and the waiting limousine.

"Did she give you an autograph?" asks an onlooker. "No," I reply. "But doesn't she look fabulous?"

'The Wings of the Dove' opens 2 January 1998 nationwide



Make-up artist Louise Constad dusts Helena's eyes with a glittery blue shadow. Her hair is made to look thicker than it really is with the aid of a few hair-pieces



She takes her last free breath of the night as the zip is forced closed

No pain, no gain. Corset on, Helena needs help to put on her own shoes



The actress as Kate Croy in 'The Wings of the Dove'

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12/WAY WE LIVE

Salsa: apart from the groping, it's perfect for single women

"It's perfect," says Caroline, 30, who dances lambada and salsa about three times a week. "It means I can go out any evening I like, on my own, enjoy myself, and keep fit at the same time."

She is talking about Latin American dancing, which has taken off bigtime in London during the last three years, providing single women with a hobby they can pursue independently of companions, male or female. However, women who salsa are complaining about the number of men attracted by the perfect groping opportunity, regarding women who dance Latin as easy targets for, at a minimum, a night's fooling.

At one bar in North London several months ago, three friends and I had an extremely unpleasant experience. As we sat down a group of men began pestering us to dance. Two gave in, believing if we danced with

BY LYNNE WALLIS

them once, they would leave us alone. My partner began dancing much closer than even the salsa required, and when his hands moved onto my bum after 40 seconds I extricated myself from his embrace and made it back to the table before noticing my friend in difficulty with a small dark man who had his knee between her legs as he bent her over backwards, clearly regarding the whole business as a sort of pre-mating ritual.

Sexual harassment being rather bad for business, the Bar Lorca went into receivership when single women stopped going, before appointing Frances McNulty who had previously run a grope-free club in Islington. McNulty said: "It was vile when I came here, I thought, I can't believe this.



Coming out: After two years of distribution to a select mailing list, the *Erotic Print Society Review* is made available in newsagents
Courtesy of The Erotic Print Society

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GMCB 1/97



Digging deep: The Sovereign Explorer oil rig 100 miles north of the Outer Hebrides

Out on the oil prospecting frontier, it's a struggle to stay clean, and green

Should Britain cease offshore oil exploration to help prevent global warming? As Greenpeace complete a 250,000-signature petition demanding a halt, Environment Correspondent Nicholas Schoon visits the deep waters of the Atlantic frontier.

It takes two hours of shuddering, noisy helicopter flight from Aberdeen to reach the Sodco Sovereign Explorer, contracted by US company Conoco to drill a well in water 2,500 ft deep. Here, 100 miles north of the Outer Hebrides, is the edge of the Continental Shelf, where the shallower under-sea planes of Europe begin to fall away into the Atlantic's abyss. The depth of water, storms and huge waves also put it on the edge of what is possible for exploring any oil below the sea bed.

Greenpeace says the oil men should not be here at all. Its first line of argument is that oil and gas reserves sufficient to cause disastrous changes in climate and sea level have already been found around the world, so the hunt for more must stop while efforts to develop non-polluting alternatives must intensify. Its second is that the extreme conditions on the frontier make the risks of a life-damaging spillage too high.

But BP and Shell have already found oil on the frontier and 24 other companies, including Conoco, have government licences to explore and exploit any fields they find. This region is the great hope for the future of Britain's offshore industry; it could keep thousands of jobs and big export revenues far into the next century as North Sea oil and gas runs down.

This summer Greenpeace made its point by occupying Rockall, a tiny isolated rock far out in the Atlantic, for several weeks. Then it attached the survival pod its activists had sheltered in to a BP exploration rig on the frontier for several days. It also obstructed the work of

seismic boats which shoot sound waves into the rock strata below the sea bed in a search for potentially oil-bearing formations. And it fought and lost a court case in which it alleged that the Government had failed to comply with EU nature conservation laws when it granted oil companies their frontier licences.

All of this hectic and expensive campaigning in the run-up to the Kyoto Climate Summit next month has had little noticeable effect on the new Government. Tony Blair, the Prime Minister, and John Prescott, his deputy, have explicitly rejected Greenpeace's demand for a halt. Undaunted, Greenpeace intends to hand a petition to Downing Street next week for which more than 200,000 signatures have been collected so far, and it claims the

support of several dozen MPs. Conoco, owned by the huge US Du Puit chemical group, spent thousands of pounds flying a small group of London-based journalists up to Aberdeen and then to the Sovereign Explorer last Friday, to show them how seriously it took environmental concerns. But one thing the company refused to discuss was whether the rig had found any trace of oil.

The 90 crew have been forbidden to comment for reasons of commercial confidentiality.

A lubricating mixture of chemicals and water known as drilling mud is constantly circulated down the hole as the drill bit screws into the earth. The mud comes back to the surface carrying rock cuttings which are then filtered out and dumped into the sea, along with some of the mud clinging

to them. These liquids used to contain toxic oils, but they are now water-based and far less harmful to life, says Conoco. Besides, by the time they reach the sea bed half a mile below they are very thinly dispersed.

Two vessels are constantly on station near the floating rig, one a support ship for emergencies and the other for any oil spills.

For much of the time, however, the sea is too choppy to put down floating booms to contain the oil which, in calm conditions could then be sucked up. The vessel carries chemical dispersants to break up any spill oil, but these would probably not be used for a big spill that had some chance of reaching the coast. For small spills, the best environmental option is to let the oil disperse naturally.

Conoco says it has searched for *Lophelia*, the deep, cold water coral found along the Atlantic frontier which Greenpeace says is at risk from oil exploitation, and on which it based its court case. So far, using side-scan sonar and remote-control submarines with cameras and bright lights, the company has found none of the coral around the Sovereign Explorer. But the television pictures reveal plenty of other life swimming and crawling along the muddy, sunless seabed, including a five-ft shark. Dolphins and pilot whales have been seen from the rig at the surface.

As for the dangers of extreme wind and wave, the rig has encountered two gales with wind of more than 70 mph since arriving on station in August. It heaved up and down 30 feet but stayed in place, thanks to eight 12-tonne anchors attached to one and a half miles of chain and cable.

Ian Blood, Conoco's UK head of exploration, accepts that the increasing use of oil and gas was likely to alter climate and that alternatives had to be developed. "They will take their place in the market eventually, 20 to 30 years out," he said. In the meantime, it was up to voters and politicians to decide if they wanted the very significant changes in lifestyles and abandoning fossil fuels involved, he said. "It's not for a company like us to tell the public what to do."

Artful eroticism for the discerning (and older) gent

A magazine devoted to the erotic and aimed at the more mature reader is to be put on sale to the public for the first time next week. It may be raunchy but, says Steve Boggs, it's all in the best possible taste.

Top writers and humourists such as Auberon Waugh, Joceline Dimbleby and Barry Humphries have been persuaded to reveal their deepest fantasies for the price of a free lunch and a complimentary print. In one edition, the novelist Anne Billson described how she would like to be wrapped in Clingfilm while, naked except for a pair of "vertiginous" stilettos, the entire string quartet of an orchestra made love to her.

From next week, Ms Mackinnon is hoping to distribute the magazine from amenable newsagents in London and at members-only clubs such as Black's, the Chelsea Arts Club and the Cobden Working Men's Club.

"We feel there is a market out there for me aged between 40 and 75 who haven't lost interest in sex but don't like the way it is presented these days," she said. "They hanker after gentler, more innocent and erotic times."

"It's all a bit haphazard at the moment because we're such a small operation, but I used to work as a dogbody at *Private Eye* and that made me realise that something can work if the people involved truly love what they're doing."

The 24-page first public edition, priced at £1, has a print run of 12,000 but Ms Maclean hopes it will grow in popularity.

"We've been amazed at the success of the *Review* when it was essentially only a newsletter," he said. "The standard of people we have been able to get to write for us has been amazing, but I think people realise that it's all very tasteful."

Nevertheless, some of the illustrations are a little strong for some people's tastes, so newsagents may have a problem in deciding where to stock it. "We don't regard ourselves as a top shelf magazine and our front covers are always very tame," said Mr Maclean. "Mind you, the back page is a different story - lots of adverts for our prints, and they're a bit raunchy. So it could be a bit of a problem. It might end up on the top shelf after all."

Not so

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DINAH HALL

13/INTERVIEW



GUY LAWRENCE

* Not so much a party animal, more a party pooper



DEBORAH
ROSS
TALKS TO
MARTIN BELL

of resources in those 75 years. What we need is less news, not more news. These days, he likes Terry Wogan and Radio 2.

Before he was approached he had never considered becoming a politician. Hadn't even voted for years. So what appealed to him? "The novelty, I suppose." The novelty? Surely if he'd been after novelty he could have just danced naked on the stage at the Windmill, which would have not only been novel, but also over with in one night instead of five years. "I'm not very good at dancing," he replies.

I suppose some people might argue there are no flies on Martin because he has bored them to death. Certainly, he is not very jokey and has a very big, solemn face. He looks good in a Strindberg play.

Anyway, mail dealt with, he humbers off. He has osteoarthritis of both hips – brought on, he thinks, by years of wearing BBC body armour – and walks slowly and painfully like some sad, old circus bear. A watery, tinkling sound comes from the next room. I assume he is watering the plants because that's why we've come here. "I must pop back to water my plants," he had said after Handforth Station. I wander after him, gin in hand. He is not watering the

plants. He is having a pee with the toilet door wide open. The thing about Martin Bell is that he really doesn't care who gets to see what. And I get to see quite a bit, as it happens. Actually, cancel out that Strindberg nonsense. He would go down rather well at the Windmill. He might even make a Chippendale, if only he could be encouraged to dance ...

Yes, he is very open, which is what made him the perfect anti-steazze candidate. He doesn't even seem to have any hidden depths. By this, I don't mean he is stupid. He isn't, by any means. He just seems relatively uncomplicated and, yes, good.

Last week, he met Neil Hamilton for the first time. They met at Martin's office in the House of Commons. Neil is now Martin's constituent. Neil wanted Martin's help in appealing against the damning verdict of the Commons Committee on Standards and Privileges. Martin has agreed. He will be raising a question about it today in the House.

Martin could not turn him away. "He is my constituent, plus a very desperate and troubled man. He's been savaged by his enemies. He's been savaged by his friends ..." But deservedly so, surely? He did seem to have an expansive lifestyle, but perhaps Thatcher just threw up those sorts of people." Martin does not lead an expansive lifestyle. He rents this cottage, and still has a house in London, but that's about it. There is nothing in his bathroom apart from a green slab of something embossed with "Fairy" in the soap dish. I think it's the sort of soap you're meant to scrub shirt collars with, but Martin uses it on his face. No wonder he has quite a rough complexion.

Has he ever done anything he is ashamed of? Yes, he confesses. It was in 1983, when the BBC was very interested about the father of some duchesse having fought alongside the Germans in the war. Martin, then in Washington, was dispatched to Industry, Illinois, to talk to the duchesse's sister. "I felt a real creep. The story was not in the public interest at all. I was just playing the good soldier." He found the sister, who was nursing a husband dying of cancer. He got the quotes and sent them back. "I prayed the satellite would fail, but it didn't." And that's

the worst thing you've ever done? "Yes."

Our day had actually started much earlier, at 9.30am, in the public library in the village of Handforth where Martin holds a surgery once every two months. He arrives with Pauline, his constituency manager. Pauline is a retired lady priest who wears a dog collar and carries a mobile phone. Martin, of course, turns up in one of his white suits. He has several, ranging from "pure white to off white". He started wearing them after he wore one once in a war zone and didn't get hurt.

The surgery goes on until noon. There's a nutter who complains the council is harassing him over the unkempt state of his garden. "It's upsetting my elderly mother,"

The thing about Martin Bell is that he really doesn't care who gets to see what. And I get to see quite a lot, as it happens

he says. "Oh, she lives with you, then," says Martin. "No, but it's still upsetting her." There's a CSA case, a father who claims he is paying too much towards the maintenance of his children. "I'm an expert when it comes to getting on with ex-wives," reassures Martin, who has two. Lastly, it's a woman worried about nuclear waste. "You've brought his problem to the right man! I was on Three Mile Island! I'm the most irradiated MP there is." He promises all his constituents that he will write to the relevant authorities. Afterwards, it's off to the station, so it really is just one thrill after another. How does he hear it? "It's all part of life's rich tapestry," he replies. "And I can really help people."

Certainly, he is beginning to find his feet. Last week, he attacked Labour in the House over the Formula One business, which he agrees is "shoddy" and "disappointing". The attack was good, he says, because it proves

once and for all "I am an independent, and not some Labour stooge". He has never met Tony Blair and although he was recently invited to a reception at Number 10, he couldn't go because "I had a prior engagement to speak at the Cheshire Ladies' Tangent Club". Does he have any policies yet? "The wonderful thing about being an independent is that you don't have to have policies." How will he vote, say, when it comes to the ban on fox hunting? "I won't be voting for it. I'm a libertarian. I am here to defend people's liberties." Oh come on, I say. Surely democracy is as much about denying people liberties as awarding them. I mean, would you award people the liberty to attend public hangings? He accepts I have a point. Usually, I am not so clever. It must be the gin.

He was born in Suffolk, the grandson of Robert Bell, one-time news editor of *The Observer*, and son of Adrian Bell, farmer, author and compiler of the first ever *Times Crossword*. "He was a wonderful man. He was very clever, but very shy. He would spend hours in his study, groaning a lot. He had opinions about everything, and liked being known as the sage of Suffolk." His mother was a fine person, too. "She was very gentle, very lovely. Everyone adored her. The only time I ever saw her angry was when my father died. How dare he die and leave her alone? He had been her whole life. They were absolute best friends." When Martin appeared on *In The Psychiatrist's Chair*, Dr Anthony Clare tried to relate the serenity of his childhood to his later taste for war. Did he need to expose himself to danger to compensate for having had such an easy ride through his early years? Martin dismissed all this as "psychobabble" then and now.

He was dispatched to boarding school at eight because there were no good schools locally. His parents, who were not affluent by any means, had to make a lot of sacrifices to pay the fees. They never went on a holiday, as far as he can remember. To pay them back, he worked very hard, and went on to get a double first in English at Cambridge. He rather regrets this double first now. "I should have spent more time having fun. I was always slaving away. There was footlights and amateur dramatics and politics but I never did any of it." Girls? "Only in the most desultory way." When did he first lose his virginity? "I am not going to reveal that because I was very late, and I don't want to expose myself to contempt and ridicule." So he does have a secret. But I doubt there will be questions in the House about it.

He married a woman called Helen when he was 31, and had two daughters, Melissa and Catherine, who are both very beautiful. "Yes, aren't they?" Melissa, of course, packed in her job at Reuters to become Martin's PR manager during his campaign. "She offered her services after that business with Christine Hamilton on Knutsford Heath." He thought he had lost the election there and then. "I came across as a hopeless amateur, which I was. But I now realise the people of Tatton wanted a hopeless amateur, rather than a professional politician." He is a good father, I think. "My daughters are the best thing I ever did. I like having them around. I like their company."

This first marriage broke up after 10 years because he fell for an American TV reporter. "So, yes, my fault entirely." Guilt? Yes. "I can only put it down to the foolishness of youth." He married her but it lasted only four years. He currently has a lady friend and "has not ruled out" a third marriage.

Anyway, he's got to go and give a talk at some Royal Television Society do in Manchester. Can he give me a lift to the station? Yes please, I say, chattering into his Rover which is full of rubbish and gifts from constituents. No, not cash-stuffed envelopes, just books on the Cheshire countryside and big posters showing the scholastic achievements of various local schools. He doesn't think they need registering. Yes, he did once hear from Al Fayed. He called Martin when Martin announced he was standing. "He wanted to know if there was any way he could help me with my campaign. I told him he could help me by steering clear until after polling day." He drops me at the station. It is dark. "Thank you very much for a lovely night, Mr Martin Bell, MP," I say in my loudest voice. "Same time next week. Same rates?" He speeds off. Whoosh! A good man, but not very jokey, like I said.

**Women
of my age
start
shoplifting
undesirable
things**

"Just do your best – it's really not at all important. Well, apart from the £42,000 it will save us in school fees..."

No, this wasn't another BBC2 documentary about pushy parents, this was us, setting off for the first entrance exam of the season: the neighbouring borough's grammar school. To get in, according to local legend, our child has to come in the top 1 per cent. However, the fact that they only measure IQ in the form of reasoning tests is a good let out for parents like myself. "You see, they take no account of creative intelligence. Now if only they would interview him, or prefer-

ably us, we could tell them all about his completely untutored love of ancient history..."

At the gates children were cruelly ripped from their parents' arms and placed in marching lines by spotty Gauleiters. "Mum," called mine in plaintive tones as he was led away. I fought my way through to him, thinking he'd had a last minute attack of nerves or wanted to check out the difference between a rhomboid and a parallelogram, but no, his final request was that I look after his Tamagotchi. The other parents looked at me with undisguised disdain, but actually I think it a very good sign that he wasn't

looking all pale and anxious and that his nurturing instincts were still well to the fore. Anyway, I'm not at all sure about this school – the prospectus has a photograph of a group of boys in the playground peering earnestly over each other's shoulders at a textbook. It is clearly a school without a sense of humour. And that is why we shall not be sending our son there – it has absolutely nothing to do with not getting in.

With two hours to kill, I decided to indulge in a bit of retail therapy, and went to test my fashion sense in Marks & Spencer. It was much more exciting when M&S stuff was

completely gashly – it was then a real achievement to find something that was nice by mistake. Now about 20 per cent of their stock is really great, 60 per cent is almost there and the rest is for your mother in law. But it requires the nose of a Condé Nast fashion hound to distinguish between the really great and the almost there. If you find yourself hovering in front of racks of Alpine-style sweaters, desperately trying to remember whether snowflakes are new and commanding with the signs above them – "yes, that really is Outstanding Value" – then you are in severe danger of getting it wrong. Or possibly going

through a middle-age crisis. In my case this was confirmed by finding two huge pairs of alien knickers in the bag with the school trousers that I had bought. This is what happens to women of my age – the slightest stress and they start shoplifting undesirable things like Royal Doulton figurines and size 18 knickers. Fortunately, I remembered seeing the knickers at the till – the assistant must have swept them into the bag with my legitimate purchases.

That very same day a friend of mine walked all the way down London's Kings Road with a Marks & Spencer velvet body still on its hanger attached to her coal. Nobody said anything to her, just in case it was a new fashion and commenting on it would make them look stupid. She was mortified of course ("It was a horrible colour, and the wrong size"), but it does make you wonder how much involuntary shoplifting goes on.

We've solved the Gulf crisis. My son briefly emerged from his teenage torpor the other day to ask if the UN sent weapons inspectors to America. Feel this sense of playground logic may have evaded Clinton and Blair in their effort to exhaust all diplomatic routes. A peace will do nicely, thank you.



DINAH HALL

14/LEADER & LETTERS

The crisis that put a love affair on the skids



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Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Smoke of battle

Sir: With all the brouhaha surrounding tobacco sponsorship of Formula One, it is too easy to forget that what is important is whether or not tobacco sponsorship of sport does encourage people to smoke.

With me, it certainly did. Aged 10, 11 or 12, I was very keen to smoke, and only because I was obsessed by Formula One. The only brands I wanted to smoke were JPS and Marlboro. JPS because I was seduced by the glossy black Lotus cars with the gold logos, and Marlboro because in 1976 James Hunt, driving the red and white Marlboro McLaren, was the ultimate *Boy's Own* hero.

It was inevitable then, that when I first had the opportunity to smoke, which was when I went away to boarding school, I took to it like a duck to water, and only managed to stop ten years later.

PIERS TAYLOR
Oaksley, Wiltshire

Sir: If, as we are told, donations to political parties are never made in order to influence political decisions but are merely indicative of the donor's support for at least some of the recipient's policies, there seems to be a simple way out of the dilemma. The state should set up an independent body, through which, by law, all political donations would be channelled. The money would be passed to the recipient without any indication of its source.

MICHAEL GREEN
Birmingham

Sir: Does anybody make a donation, large or small, to a political party without self-interest? It may be hopes for higher pensions, better quality education or a more favourable business climate.

Would it not be refreshing to hear an admission from government that many decisions in life, especially political ones, are a matter of expediency and compromise? We have a brilliant industry in this country making the best racing cars in the world and there is the strongest case for protecting it - donations or no donations.

TOM KAREN
Lechworth, Hertfordshire

Sir: A limit on party campaign expenses is enforceable at con-

Another modicum of innocence has been stripped away, as F Scott Fitzgerald once put it when describing the arguments that gradually destroy a love affair. Yes, Tony Blair apologised, but as lovers often apologise: for not telling the whole truth earlier, and for not anticipating how his actions would be interpreted.

The question is, if he had known what a fuss there would be, what would he have done differently? Would he have insisted that the ban on tobacco sponsorship should apply to Formula One along with every other sport? He says no, although there has been a bit of squirming on this, and a hint of another policy S-bend. It is possible that the Government might seek to give motor racing 10 years to go smoke-free, rather than an open-ended exemption.

Would he have refused to meet Bernie Ecclestone, who had given Labour £1m, and, the Prime Minister told *On The Record* yesterday, who had "made a firm

commitment to further donations"? No, he said. "It would have been bizarre if the bloke had been in a worse position as a result of donating to the Labour Party." No, it wouldn't. That is precisely what happens when you avoid giving the appearance of a conflict of interest. Douglas Hogg, for example, turned down a job as a treasury minister because his wife was an economics journalist. Shifting the door of No 10 to Mr Ecclestone would have been no more bizarre than Labour being £1m worse off for having changed its policy in a way that suits the Formula One magnate. As the wags have pointed out, Mr Ecclestone got a real bargain: the U-turn he wanted and his money back.

Would the Prime Minister have sought the advice of Ethics Man, Sir Patrick Neill, any earlier? No, because that had been done "immediately". Let us not quibble: the letter to Sir Patrick went four days after the decision to exempt Formula One was taken, during which time Tessa Jowell was

being hung out to dry over her husband's motor-racing interests and press officers were allowed to deny knowledge of donations from Mr Ecclestone. The point is that Sir Patrick's predecessor, Lord Nolan, should have been consulted before the decision was taken. Mr Blair wrote to Frank Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health, the day after his meeting with Mr Ecclestone to ask for the special problems of Formula One to be considered. If he had handed back the money beforehand, the decision would have been seen to be impartial, although it would no doubt have been criticised on other grounds.

It is not simply the timing of themissive to Sir Patrick which was wrong, however, but its contents. Drafted by Jonathan Powell, the Prime Minister's chief of staff, and approved by Mr Blair himself, although signed by Tom Sawyer, Labour's general secretary, this is the "smoking letter" of the affair. It is a thoroughly evasive document. Mr Blair explained

yesterday that he did not tell the Commons about the possibility of a new donation from Mr Ecclestone because by the time the letter was sent "I was focused on the original donation" of £1m. On the contrary, the letter focuses on the "offer" of further money, in a doomed effort to steer Sir Patrick into letting the party keep the £1m while confirming its decision to turn down further donations.

Mr Blair's understanding of the concept of a conflict of interest is, in its moral smallness, shockingly like the arrogance of Conservative ministers over the years. Of course it is better that the Labour party discloses the names of people and organisations that give more than £5,000 up to 21 months after the event than not at all, which was the Conservative position. But oooe of what we know now was disclosed under these rules. It has been forced out of the participants in the same way that it might have been forced out of the previous government. And being forced to

hand the money back after the decision does not testify to moral probity.

No one doubts that Mr Blair thought he was making a decision in the national interest. His public apology even had a kind of chorus yesterday, in the form of Tony Banks, the sports minister, who spoke of "naivety" and the unthinkability of prime ministerial corruption: "The man's as squeaky clean it's awesome."

But what would Mr Blair have done differently, if he had been given the chance? He did not say. In his interview, his plea was that of the transgressor through the ages. Trust me, I know it looks bad, but I am not like those other men. "I hope that people know me well enough and realise the type of person I am, to realise I would never do anything to harm the country or anything improper. I never have."

This is the kind of plea that loses its currency over time, as each successive layer of innocence is stripped away, and the love affair loses its magic.

LETTERS



to put forward their side of the argument?

RICHARD DAVIS
London N11

Sir: Now Bernie Ecclestone has had his money back, can Labour voters have their manifesto commitment back, too?

If the tobacco companies and their friends haven't paid for a favour, why should they receive it?

N R BASSETT
London N19

Meanwhile, in the pub

Sir: The latest proposals from Action on Smoking and Health ("Smokers face American-style prohibition", 10 November) raise the question of what the effect of regulation would be on British pubs and restaurants.

In 1996, the Campaign for Real Ale published details of a survey on this issue, carried out by the East Midlands

Brewing Association. This found that 53 per cent favoured the introduction of no-smoking areas, with the remainder against. Only 9 per cent supported a total ban - not so much a silent majority as a strident minority.

In Toronto, a US-style ban was partially relaxed because of a 30 per cent loss of business.

It is right to question the motivation of people who cannot or will not tolerate tobacco smoke and yet seek work in a pub. This is about as convincing a someone with acrophobia asking for a job as a steeplejack.

DAVID J ANDERSON
Wakefield,
West Yorkshire

Epidemic

Sir: Is it me, or am I seeing the word "ubiquitous" everywhere these days?

JOHN MITCHELL
Hertford

Power to the GPs

Sir: While the broad thrust of the proposed NHS reforms revealed in *The Independent* on 12 November is to be welcomed, they raise a number of concerns.

Reducing bureaucracy and abolishing the competitive ethos that forces hospitals to try

in effect to put each other out of business can only be good.

Transferring the power to set clinical priorities to those who most fully understand the problem is also good, but to give almost complete budgetary control to one section of the NHS - general practitioners - may produce new problems.

While GPs have perhaps

the best overview of the local

population's needs, nursing and allied health care staff and hospital doctors will have an equally valid perspective. To exclude all these others from spending decisions would risk recreating

many of the antagonisms that

existed in the days when power

was seen to rest disproportionately with hospital consultants.

Moreover, GPs are the only

individuals in the NHS who, in

theory, can gain financial profit

from the allocation of NHS

funds to facilities in which they

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are to have significant budgetary control of the NHS, consider

should be given to making them salaried employees, in line with everyone else.

DR ANDREW A JEFFREY
Roude, Northamptonshire

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DR ANDREW A JEFFREY
Roude, Northamptonshire

Sir: I applaud the Government's intention to move away from the NHS internal market and give budgets for hospital, primary and community care to GPs. However, in your leader of 12 November you are right to question whether GPs have the interest or managerial capacity to run the commissioning process.

There are already recruit-

ment problems in general practice and there is doubt whether we will soon have enough GPs left on the front line treating patients.

Moreover, GPs are the only individuals in the NHS who, in theory, can gain financial profit from the allocation of NHS funds to facilities in which they have a financial interest. If they are to have significant budgetary control of the NHS, consideration should be given to making them salaried employees, in line with everyone else.

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Roude, Northamptonshire

Sir: The Rev Peter Hall suggests that Jesus may not have had a beard (letter, 13 November). Honesty compels me to remind him of the prophetic verse concerning Jesus in Isaiah 50:6:

"I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard".

NEIL JACOBSON
Wembley, Middlesex

Biblical beards

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Croft options

Sir: Paul McCann ("The tabloid casting couch of Lara Croft", 12 November) suggests that if we have been "in a persistent vegetative state for a year" we shall not know who Lara Croft is. The opposite is the case. Only those who have been in such a state for a year will know.

GEOFFREY BRACE
Exeter

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GEOFFREY BRACE
Exeter

together with the bottle, saying: "Something's hit wrong here, I think."

If you're like us, you probably feel seriously under-endowed when you open your wallet to pay a bill in a shop or a restaurant and reveal that you only have one or two credit cards.

Now is the time for you or your loved ones to walk proud with VIP Plastic.

This is simply a stash of extra personal cards for you to put in your wallet, such as State of Texas Kidney

Donor Card, the Bank of Euro Disney Long Loan Card, the Czech Touring Club Road Relay Card, the Reykjavik Casino Premier Gold Card etc.

They are all fake but they look

as authentic as your own cards.

Give someone a VIP present this year - Very Impressive Plastic! (from £35...)

Another Christmas Bazaar Supplement soon!

Just right for Christmas (but don't expect the company to exist in January)

MILES
KINGTON

Christmas is nearly here, so it's time for the first of our regular Christmas Bazaar Advertising Supplements.

The following items can be obtained from us, and we guarantee unconditionally that all of them are manufactured by people who want to make a quick killing this Xmas and then change the name of their company or do a midnight flit.

The Esther Rantzen Obscene Vegetable Seed Pack is a gloriously funny tribute to a woman who would be forgotten by now were it not for her pioneering work in breaking the taboo against showing suggestively shaped vegetables on prime-time TV. All the seeds in this lewd load are guaranteed to produce phallic parsnips, Rahelaisian radishes, tumescent tomatoes, or other rampant legumes! NB: the rare person who is disturbed by suggestive green-

grocery can ring Vegwatch for coun-

selling; the phone number comes with each packet: £40.99 for a jumbo pack.

Are you always losing the end of your sticky tape? Do you get out a roll of sticky tape and run your finger round one way, looking for the elusive end, then the other way, but always fail to detach anything that looks like the end? Which was so easy to find when you first started the roll ... All your troubles are over with Small 'n' Sticky rolls of tape. Every time you want a bit of adhesive tape, you simply start a new roll - then throw it away! Each pack contains 100 rolls, and there's only 10 inches of tape on each roll. You need never look for the end of the tape again - just chuck it in the bin and start a new one! Only £79.99 a pack. Affordable and satisfying.

Many of us hanker for the old days when all matches were made in Bri-

tain, had Union flags on the front and

a joke on the back. Recapture those

days with a pack of Peel Off, Peel

On, Sticky Back All-British Jokes!

Simply peel a joke off the roll every

time you buy a box of matches and

stick it carefully to the back. £12 a roll.

The doll for the grown-up with the

sense of humour: the Australian

Barbie Doll! Don't forget that in Aus-

tralia "barbie" means only one thing

- a barbecue. That's right - Australian

Barbie Doll is a hunky man with a

bloodstained apron and smoke-

smeared cheeks, holding a kangaroo

steak on a butcher's fork! If you take

his outdoor clothes off, you'll find that his chest is cruelly scarred and tat-

tued. That's because he used to be

Kanga, The Interplanetary Killer, and

we couldn't sell many of them so we

Dated? Dan? Don't be so desperately dim



THOMAS SUTCLIFFE
ON THE VIRTUES
OF IRRELEVANCE

I was dismayed to read the other day that Desperate Dan is to be retired after 60 years of appearances in *The Dandy*. It seems that this might be a tactical affair by the publisher, merely a calculated prelude to one of those "back by popular demand" re-creations once sufficient publicity has been whipped up. But even if it's too early to mourn the porcupine-jawed toughie, there was still something depressing about the reason given. Desperate Dan was declared not to be "relevant" to today's young readers. This rather startlingly implied that there was a time at which he had been "relevant", in the specialised use of that term which might be roughly paraphrased as "responsive to our contemporary needs".

But were the children of 1957 really more likely to recognise elements of their own life in Cactusville than the children of 1997? It's possible that they would have been less disturbed by the notion of cow-pie - both because the fear that eating beef might turn you into a vegetable was still a long way in the future, and because they may have been more familiar with the fact that meat comes from animals (my wife recently heard a child of our acquaintance asking her mother what "chicken" was. "It's what you get when you peel a nugget, darling" was the ... answer). Perhaps today's children are "unversed" by the horns that protrude from Aunt Aggie's Jacuzzi-sized pie dishes. But that doesn't seem enough on its own to account for Dan's slide into "irrelevance" - that gravest of contemporary crimes.

Of course, it would be relatively easy to put a case for Dan's continuing "relevance" to the childish imagination. You could talk about the way in which he represents the child's unappeasable appetites or the child's dilemma of having more strength than control, which results in a trail of blameless destruction. But it feels little dreary and priggish to advance such an argument. Quite apart from the fact that irrelevance should play a part in every child's life, to engage with the argument is to capitulate to the prejudice against the archaic which the whole notion of "relevance" enshrines. Because what is really meant when it is said that Dan is "no longer relevant" is that he wasn't born recently enough. He shares with other historic figures the almost insurmountable affliction of antiquity, a disability which can only grow worse as time passes. He may not be buried yet (can a cartoon figure actually die?) but in a way you could say that Desperate Dan has been admitted to the unavoidable soci-

ety of Dead White European Males.

Writing about this epithet the critic Christopher Ricks pointed out the curiosity of despising a state which we will all, one day or other, come to share. "For some of us", he wrote, "the most brutal hatred within the acronym DWEM is not the racism of 'white' or the sexism of 'male' but the embittered provincialism which makes Dead a term of abuse." Homer? You pathetic stiff. Shakespeare? You're worm-food, mate.

Ricks is talking about temporal provincialism, of course - a form of yokelism that easily passes us by. Lounging in the undistinguished hamlet of Now (which we are convinced is the centre of the universe), we stare suspiciously down the rutted road that leads to Then, pitching stones at any unfamiliar face. Occasional travellers are allowed across the village boundaries but their papers will be scrutinised first. Only if their passports carry that all important stamp - STILL RELEVANT - will they be permitted to go on their way without molestation.

Curiously the visual arts don't seem to suffer from quite the same cultural bigotry as more discursive art-forms. It would sound distinctly odd, for example, to hear someone arguing that Giott or Raphael were "still relevant" to a modern gallery goer, or that the Venus de Milo had "relevance" to modern aesthetics. This may be because we have found a way to incorporate antiquity into paintings as a value rather than a disability - because they are individual, irreplaceable objects, their age only enhances their preciousness. We treasure their beauty in their funny old ways rather than resenting it. And this fondness is further assisted by the fact that their communications do not require speech; they provoke interrogation but will not answer it. They keep themselves to themselves. Works which exist in print (and in language), on the other hand, have no such sentimental protection - they are treated almost as unpredictable relatives who have long outlived their welcome. They talk in funny ways that aren't always immediately understandable (don't they care anything about our rights as consumers?) Most scandalous of all - they don't always seem to want to talk about us.

Because what goes unspoken when the term "relevant" is used as an approval are the words "me, me, me". Demanding that a classic work, or even a collection of historical facts, should demonstrate its "relevance" to our current lives before we will have anything to do with it is like agreeing to talk to someone only after you have made them promise that you will be the only subject of conversation. Not only is it stupidly narcissistic but it effectively guarantees that your provincial certainties will remain undisturbed.

Why not, for a change, celebrate the virtues of "irrelevance" - in particular the bracing effect of discovering that there are ways of living which bear no relation whatsoever to our own contemporary pieties or needs. The faintly hysterical search for "relevance" in the works of the past (and the present too) is more than the understandable desire to seek out continuities of human feeling: it is a scramble for another shard of mirror in which we can gaze, adoring and fascinated, at our own delightful features.

Germany and Russia must join this uncomfortable quest for the truth



LOUISE JURY
THE NAZI GOLD
CONFERENCE

Every nation with a Nazi gold connection has been invited to next month's international conference on the issue. Probably more than 40 countries will be represented there. The Swiss have at last confirmed that they will be coming. But the most troubling sign in the run-up to this long-awaited event is that two of the most important affected nations - Germany and Russia - are still unwilling to attend.

A flurry of meetings have taken place between embassy officials and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to provide reassurances that the purpose is not to put them in the dock (though there will be some who think that is not an unreasonable place for them to be). The diplomacy is delicate.

Nazi gold is a subject which raises passionate emotions. The term has become shorthand for assets looted by the Nazis, most poignantly from Jews who they then killed in concentration camps. The Nazi gold affair has also embraced the question of the wealth which many Jewish families secreted away in bank accounts, no-

tably in Switzerland, where an inflexible adherence to its secretive banking laws prevented the accounts being reclaimed by survivors or their descendants when the war was over.

Many camp survivors are now elderly, and sorely in need of the money which was wrongfully taken from them. Lord (Greve) Janner, chairman of the Holocaust Educational Trust, a lobbying group, has spoken emotionally on this. It was he who first suggested a conference as a way of speeding what recompense may still be possible for those in desperate want of it.

But, for once, even his language has been moderated. Lord Janner, like the Foreign Office, is conscious that some countries could be scared away if it looks though demands may be made of them. He wants maximum attendance for a meeting on which much is being pinned.

The stated aims of the three-day gathering are: to pool available knowledge on the historical facts on gold looted by the Nazis from countries and individuals; to examine steps taken up until now to reimburse countries and compensate individual victims; and to examine the case for further compensation of individuals.

It is point three that is causing the problem. Inside Switzerland, there have been strong mutterings that its efforts so far - launching an investigation into the role of Swiss banks and setting up a historical commission and two different funds for those who suffered - have won little credit in the outside world. The foreign minister, Flavio Cotti, appears determined to show contrition, but some Swiss remain suspicious that the conference will

provide another opportunity for critics to point a finger. Only after British reassurances that Switzerland will not be made a scapegoat has attendance been agreed.

Germany has noted the international criticism heaped upon Switzerland with concern. Senior German officials are understood to feel they have gone to great lengths already to make amends for their country's wartime activities and are worried that the conference will not acknowledge that. Russia, meanwhile, is simply adamant it will return no "spoils of war", whatever their origin. Earlier this year, its lower house of parliament, the Duma, overturned a seven-year-old agreement that spoils plundered by the Red Army at the end of the war should be returned to Germany. Millions of Russians suffered: what it seized in 1945 from the Germans was only reasonable recompence, they argued. That some of the goods seized from Germany were not Germany's in the first place is a point they wish to ignore.

Yet the conference could certainly benefit Switzerland and possibly Germany and Russia too. Although all three will undoubtedly come under the spotlight, the Jewish organisations who are attending are just as interested in countries whose role has not been publicly questioned hitherto.

It is believed that the banks of Liechtenstein, for instance, whose secrecy laws are no less inflexible than the Swiss, could shed light on the whereabouts of some assets if they chose to do so. Although the Vatican is sending a couple of priests, it is unwilling to bend rules that prevent the opening of its files for 100 years, even though those, too, might help in giving

clues to what was going on during the war years.

Yet without willingness and openness, attendance means little. Getting 150 delegates to Lancaster House is an achievement of sorts, particularly in the comparatively short time-scale of six months, but it must not be an end in itself.

The Jewish community, to whom this conference means so much, has every right to expect that action will follow. This is the most promising opportunity yet to discover what happened to gold - and possibly other assets, such as paintings - whose whereabouts are unknown.

That is the problem with delicate diplomacy. There is a limit to how delicate you can be when the whole point of the conference is to raise difficult questions to which some may not want to provide answers. There are many countries, such as Portugal, Sweden, Turkey and Spain, where looted gold was traded by the Nazis to buy imports during the war. There are others, such as Argentina and Brazil, which were known Nazi boltholes. It is inevitable that confronting their involvement will prove uncomfortable.

Everyone knows that really, The logic of getting everyone together is that the moral pressure for further action will be inescapable, which is, of course, why countries like Germany and Russia are dithering. But if ever an issue demanded the settling aside of self-interest, this must be it. All those who might be able to help must take part.

Robin Cook may not quite have realised the diplomatic minefield into which he was leading his officials when he agreed to host the conference, but it was undoubtedly an appropriate grand gesture from a Foreign Secretary espousing a new ethical foreign policy. The Government should not be shy of it and the delegates should do their utmost to settle the matter. Whatever assets remain must be identified and given back to the Jewish community while those who have suffered are still alive to benefit from them.

Some people have asked why Jews are pursuing their outstanding claims only now, more than half a century after the end of World War Two. The answer is simple: it had not seemed possible before. It does now. When Mr Cook opens the conference in three weeks' time, the opportunity must not be wasted.

Cut the feeble apologies, just get out the sackcloth and flay yourself



GLENDA COOPER
ON SAYING
SORRY

Who's sorry now? Well, yesterday it was that naughty Tony Blair, who came out and apologised for not owning up sooner to the £1m donation given by Formula One chief Bernie Ecclestone.

But then this year we've hardly been able to draw breath in between people stepping forward with yet another "mea culpa". Not since the Roman Catholic Church came up with

the confession wheeze have we seen so many people proclaiming themselves candidates for forgiveness.

There was Tony Blair himself apologising to the Irish for the potato famine, William Hague saying sorry for entering the ERM on behalf of the Tory party, the Americans regretting their treatment of Native Americans. Ditto the Australians to the Aborigines, New Zealanders to the Maoris. Forget compassion fatigue, "sorry" fatigue is the suffering of the moment.

In fact the year became more marked by those who did not apologise than those who did. Remember, no one has as yet put their head above the parapet to take responsibility for the Millennium Dome, the Spice Girls or Tamagotchi.

But saying sorry did not always sit so easily with the British character. The spoof history *1066 And All That* satirised traditional British feeling by castigating Edward the Confessor as "Weak King" mainly because he was always "with difficulty prevented from confessing ... crimes as he has

done" and that they should have focused on it earlier. Essentially, then, it is not that the policy was wrong or whether the money should have been accepted in the first place but that Labour is sorry the crisis has not been handled well. One spokesman speaking to a Sunday newspaper summed it up: "We have done nothing wrong but we have behaved as if we had."

In her book *You Just Don't Understand*, which dissects male and female nuances of conversation, Deborah Tannen, a professor of linguistics, points out that men often seem confused that women appear to apologise all the time. "Women frequently say 'I'm sorry' to express sympathy and concern, not apology," Professor Tannen says. "This confusion is rooted in the double meaning of the word sorry ... 'To say sorry' used figuratively to express regret could be interpreted as literally as 'I apologise'."

So it's not only the prime minister's haircut - or Blainstyle as it's now affectionately known - that's calculated to appeal to the elusive women voter. It's even the figurative use of the word "apology".

ogising. But Tannen is wrong to see women as the only sex who differentiate between two levels of sorry. Any woman who has heard a man mumble apologies for coming in late, or seeing an ex-girlfriend, or failing to ring when they should, will have heard the "I'm sorry you're upset" line (with the strong subtext "but I find it incomprehensible you are").

It's at times like this when you sigh over the limits of the English language - a dilemma

you don't suffer in Japan, where there are 50 ways to say you're sorry.

Much was made of the Japanese Premier's decision on the 50th anniversary of VE Day to use two particular words in expressing his deep remorse for the events of 50 years ago. For the first time Tomiichi Murayama used the word "owabi", which is the most emotive and intense way to express regret and self-reproach, and in a television interview he also used the word "shazai", described as "a strong form of apology ... which eliminates the ambiguities and shadings".

So what we want, Tony, is some sort of "owabi" or "shazai". Your current apology just doesn't cut the silk. In our Oprah Winfrey world only full penitence will do. Let's have a ritual apology with a grand procession round Silverstone. As the starting flag is lowered, let's see you leading the spin-doctors flogging themselves with empty bag packets, and smearing their foreheads with the ends of Marlboro Lights. Perhaps it's time to create your own Ash Wednesday.

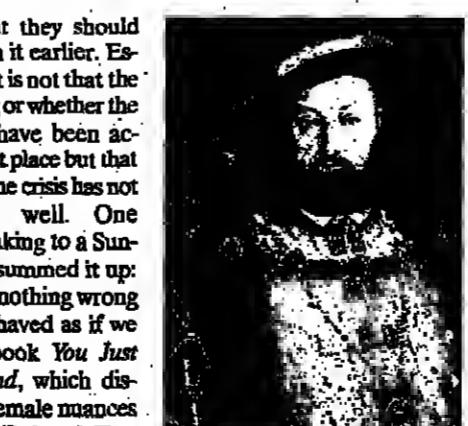
It's at times like this when you sigh over the limits of the English language - a dilemma

you don't suffer in Japan, where there are 50 ways to say you're sorry.

Much was made of the Japanese Premier's decision on the 50th anniversary of VE Day to use two particular words in expressing his deep remorse for the events of 50 years ago. For the first time Tomiichi Murayama used the word "owabi", which is the most emotive and intense way to express regret and self-reproach, and in a television interview he also used the word "shazai", described as "a strong form of apology ... which eliminates the ambiguities and shadings".

So what we want, Tony, is some sort of "owabi" or "shazai". Your current apology just doesn't cut the silk. In our Oprah Winfrey world only full penitence will do. Let's have a ritual apology with a grand procession round Silverstone. As the starting flag is lowered, let's see you leading the spin-doctors flogging themselves with empty bag packets, and smearing their foreheads with the ends of Marlboro Lights. Perhaps it's time to create your own Ash Wednesday.

It's at times like this when you sigh over the limits of the English language - a dilemma



"Sorry" was the hardest word for Henry VIII

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16/OBITUARIES

Stefan Lorant

István Loránt (Stefan Lorant), film maker, editor and writer; born Budapest 22 February 1901; married three times (two sons, one daughter; and one son deceased); died Rochester, Minnesota, 14 November 1997.

Stefan Lorant was the "godfather" of photo-journalism. He expressed ideas initially as pictures on the silent screen and then as pictures on the page. *Picture Post*, which he created, was one of the design icons of the century.

Before the first issue on 1 October 1938, a number of other pictorial publications, like *Illustrated London News*, the *Sphere*, the *Tatler*, the *Sketch*, and the *Syndicator* were already on the news-stands, all catering to the upper classes. *Picture Post* appealed to the common man. Within two years Lorant brought its circulation to 1.7 million, with an estimated readership of half the adult population of Britain.

His success was due to his gift for recognising the value of pictures and presenting them in a simple and logical manner. He also had an acute political awareness of developments within Europe in turmoil. *Picture Post* came out on the side of humanity, on the side of decency, on the side of common sense. As editor Lorant had complete control of the creative process, from balanced choice of subject matter to a total integration of text and illustration.

He was born Lóránt István in Budapest in 1901, and came from a well-to-do middle class family. His father, as a young man, worked in newspapers and later became manager of Erdélyi, the Budapest photographic studio used by the royal family

and the upper classes. Lorant's teenage years were set against a background of political extremes and unrest, which had a profound effect on him. In 1919, aged 18, he graduated from the Academy of Economics and left Budapest, not prepared to live under the Fascist dictatorship of Admiral Horthy.

Without a visa to enter Germany he was caught on the Czechoslovakian border town of Bodenbach on the Elbe. Helped by a young contributor to the local *Bodenbach* newspaper — who he only later recognised as Franz Kafka — he obtained employment across the river in Tetschen as first violinist in a silent movie house.

After six months he had saved some money, obtained a border pass into Germany and bought a rail ticket to Berlin.

It was mid March 1920 and his arrival coincided with the first day of the Kapp Putsch. Lorant took the next train to Vienna. From then until the spring of 1925 he worked in the emerging silent movie industry first in Austria and then in Germany. He recalled, "At first I was a still photographer doing pictures for publicity, then I became a cameraman, a scriptwriter, and finally a director — all within a single year." His first film, *Mozart's Leben, Liebe und Leiden* ("Mozart's life, loves and suffering"), established him as one of Europe's leading cameramen. He gave Marlene Dietrich her first film test and turned her down, and began his long friendship with Greta Garbo.

By 1925, in Vienna and Berlin he had made 14 films, some of which he wrote, directed and photographed. He had learned to tell stories through pictures on a screen. Now he was to use that experience to tell stories with pictures on a page.

In 1925, having mastered German, Lorant began writing articles for various Berlin newspapers including the *Berliner Zeitung am Morgen* (BZ) and *Morgenpost*. Over the next 13 years he was to successfully edit eight pictorial publications: *Das Magazin* (1925), *Ufa Magazin* (1926), *Bilderd Courier* (1927-28), *Münchner Illustrierte Presse* (1928-33) in Germany; the *Pest Napló* magazine (1933-34) in Hungary; *Weekly Illustrated* (1934), *Lilliput* (1937-40) and *Picture Post* (1938-40) in England.

He had an excellent eye for a photograph and published work by emerging photojournalists including Brassai, André Kertész, Martin Munkácsy, Dr Erich Salomon — who all became close friends. As editor of *Münchner Illustrierte Presse*, a large pictorial weekly, he encountered Hitler, and recalled with disgust "his clammy, soft hands". Hitler became Chancellor at the end of January 1933; on 9 March 1933 the Nazi troops marched into Munich and five days later Lorant was placed under protective custody. He was kept in prison for six and a half months, never charged with any crime, never taken to court and never told why he was imprisoned. After 196 days he was released and immediately left Germany for Budapest.

It was the publisher of the Budapest morning newspaper the *Pest Napló* who had kept Lorant's case alive while he was in prison. On his release the same editor invited him to create and edit the paper's new Sunday pictorial magazine. The large format, 11 1/4 x 16 inches, allowed him to present pictures in a way that would engage the reader.

During his time as editor from December 1933 to March 1934 he was able to recover from his prison experiences and to

write his diary, which was published in England in 1934 as *I was Hitler's Prisoner* (it sold more than a million copies). The experience also provided him with the blueprint for what was to become the first popular pictorial magazine in England. Within a week of his arrival in England, he was hired by Odhams Press to start *Weekly Illustrated*, selling for 2d.

In *Weekly Illustrated* and later in *Picture Post* Lorant's layout function beat as double-page spreads, with all the elements of individual photographs, text and captions balanced and brought together. There are exceptions: major photo essays may start on a right-hand page, a single one-page essay may fit on a left-hand page. Lorant achieved this by placing advertising at the front or towards the back of the magazine.

It was his ability to tell stories with pictures rather than words that sold the magazine. He explained: "I tried to use pictures as a composer uses notes, I tried to compose a story in photographs."

Lilliput was pocket-sized, racy, irreverently illustrated, and one of the most popular magazines of the Thirties and Forties. The first issue appeared in July 1937, two years to the month after the first Penguin paperback and at the same price of 6d. Its articles and short stories were illustrated by photographers like Bill Brandt; Lorant was also the only person prepared to publish John Heartfield's political montages.

Lilliput was unique in Lorant's repertoire in that it was the only magazine he owned, albeit in part, through his company Pockt Publications. The original directors of the company were Lorant and Alison Blair; from the third issue, they were joined by Sydney Jacobson. In 1938 the

magazine was sold to Hulton Press who became the publisher of *Picture Post* and Lorant continued to edit both magazines while he remained in England.

Winston Churchill was still in the political wilderness when Lorant, an admirer of his, first met him early in 1939. They had lunch at Chartwell, and Lorant brought Kurt Hulton with him to take photographs. Churchill's exposure as a writer in *Picture Post* was instrumental in returning him to the forefront of public life.

Lorant described how at lunch, to his horror, Churchill shovelled in a whole bowl of steak and kidney pie at the same time as sipping brandy, smoking a cigar and eating chocolate. Throughout lunch he didn't speak a word, instead musing on a speech. "It must have been half an hour though it seemed to me like days. He was in a world of his own."

In July 1940 Lorant left England. The impounding of his bicycle followed by the confiscation of his car had been the first indignities, and he had never received English citizenship. As an enemy alien he was not allowed to live in the countryside so had moved to the Savoy Hotel in London, to be within walking distance of the office. Every Thursday he had to report and line up with other "enemy aliens" in the basement of Bow Street Police Station. He was the editor of the largest English magazine and the Nazi newspapers called him Germany's enemy No 1. His concern was that if Germany were to invade England he would be among the first to be killed. On his departure, his place in the editorial chair of *Lilliput* and *Picture Post* was taken over by Tom Hopkinson, previously his assistant on both *Weekly*



Photograph: Kurt Hulton

Ability to tell stories with pictures: Lorant with Churchill, 1939

Illustrated and *Picture Post*.

In America from 1940, Lorant lived primarily as an author. A year after his arrival, his pictorial biography on Abraham Lincoln (*Lincoln: His Life in Photographs*) was published. Other visual narratives on American historical subjects followed: *The New World* in 1946; *The Presidency* in 1951; biographies of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1950 and Theodore Roosevelt nine years later; *The Glorious Burden* in 1968, a history of American presidential elections from Washington to Carter; *Pittsburgh, the Story of an American City* in 1964; and *Sieg Heil*, an illustrated history of Germany from Bismarck to Hitler in 1974.

In all, Lorant wrote 20 books

including major revisions of his works. The revisions were vitally important to him. Talking about his Lincoln books, which have gone into four different revised and enlarged editions and sold over 145,000 copies, he stated that "When I finish a book, I really begin to work on it and improve it".

— Michael Hallett

Georges Marchais

Georges René Louis Marchais, politician; born La Hoguette, Calvados, 7 June 1920; Member Central Committee Communist Party of France 1956-97, Political Bureau 1959-95, Deputy Secretary-General 1970-72, Secretary-General 1972-94, Deputy for Val-de-Marne 1973-97, Member European Parliament 1979-89; married 1941 Paulette Noëtinger (three daughters; marriage dissolved), 1977 Liliane Garcia (one son); died Paris 17 November 1997.

Georges Marchais was leader of the French Communist Party for over 20 years. During his tenure the party's share of the vote sank from 20 per cent to 6; each electoral setback led to waves of disidence which all but drained the party of activists.

Although challenged severally and subject to severe criticism over his personal style, his pro-Russian strategy and intellectual shortcomings, and he was never dislodged because the party remained internally undemocratic. Marchais projected himself as an aggressive, knock-about character, but as the party's vote sank his media appearances became less frequent. He left the party unreformed and, unlike most western Communist parties, committed to the Leninist project.

He was born in 1920 in a small village in Calvados. In 1935 he left Normandy for Paris and became a skilled worker in aeronautics. On 12 December 1942 he signed papers as a volunteer worker to

go to Germany (for which he got a bonus) and went to Leipzig to work for Messerschmitt. Marchais always claimed he was a forced labourer. He was not. *Service du travail obligatoire* was not introduced until 17 February 1943. Marchais could have escaped or applied for exemption. The subsequent cover-up was a minor Watergate.

Marchais remained in Germany until 1943. His life from 1943 to 1947 remains obscure, but the controversy is such that, as Auguste Lecocq noted, sooner or later witnesses will come forward to swear that Marchais and Maurice Thorez (the French Communist leader, in the Soviet Union at the time) were together on the barricades in Paris in August 1944.

Marchais joined the Communist Party in 1947, the beginning of the Cold War, when the Communists were in a sectarian phase. Thorez's hand can be easily detected in Marchais' association. He was active in the metalworkers' union, one of the strongest Communist unions and became a full-time union official in 1951. He began to move up the party in 1955 when he joined the secretariat of Thorez's federation and he probably attended the international school in Moscow the same year.

In 1960 he joined the Central Committee as an "alternate" and in 1961 he was made organisation secretary after the ousting of Thorez's rival Marcel Serrin. Marchais took the lead in condemning the students during the May 1968 events, dismissing them as petit-bourgeois adventurers. The union strategy to buy off the

strikers with wage rises and to isolate them from the students was enforced by Marchais with characteristic authority.

Control of the party organisation had enabled Marchais to build up a strong position and in 1970 he was made joint secretary-general and in 1972 full secretary-general. In 1973 he was returned to the National Assembly from the Val-de-Marne, a seat which he held in subsequent elections.

Marchais had the luck to be associated with the popular strategy of alliance with the Socialists in the early Seventies but the misfortune to be at the top when the strategy paid dividends to the Socialists rather than the Communists. The alliance concluded in 1971 did not bring victory in the legislative elections of 1973 but those elections did

show the danger for the Communists of rising Socialist force led by François Mitterrand and, after the presidential elections of 1974 and Socialist gains in by-elections, Marchais decided to ride two horses.

On the one side he decided to put a new face on old policies and embarked on a campaign to modernise the Communist image. It started with his book *Le Défi Démocratique* (1973) and continued through the 22nd Congress in 1976, remembered as the high point of "liberalisation". In his book he accepted multi-party politics and gave Poland as an example of a multi-party system. The attitude to the Soviet bloc was that if there were spots on the sun it did not mean that there was no sun. The East remained the model. Marchais had stopped visiting Russia from 1974 to 1976, although high-level contacts were maintained.

On the other side were the attacks on the Socialist Party, which steadily increased in tone. Marchais attacked Mitterrand personally and accused the Socialists of moving rightward. In 1977 Marchais decided the alliance with the Socialists was undermining the party and he torpedoed it. The result was a disaster for the party, but it enabled a rapprochement with the Russians. Marchais moved back into the Soviet fold and showed support for the Russian invasion of Afghanistan (delivered on television direct from Moscow) and for the Polish communists against Solidarity.

In early 1980, after Marchais' meeting with Brezhnev in

Moscow, the party started to campaign against the emplacement of cruise and Pershing missiles in Western Europe by Nato and hosted with the Polish Communists a disarmament conference in Paris.

The 1981 presidential campaign was a desperate one. Marchais as Communist candidate faced the principal figure of the French left, Mitterrand, whom the Communists had helped to build up. The anti-Socialist tone of Marchais' campaign was strident, but despite the party's quasi-racialist appeal to anti-immigrant feeling, he lost one quarter of the party's vote and was easily outdistanced by Mitterrand. Making the best of a poor hand, the Communists bargained for four ministerial portfolios, but Marchais remained outside government. In 1984, after a further electoral setback, Marchais pulled the party out of government and it once again went on to the attack against the Socialists, hoping to capitalise on rising discontent. The result of yet another sectarian turn was a further wave of dissidence, again humiliating the party — although Marchais remained in control.

Although he at first welcomed Gorbachev's *perestroika*,

he became increasingly dismayed at the direction of Russian policy. The result was the emergence in the mid-1980s of a trend in the Communist international, dubbed the "third and a half" international, in which Marchais got together with hardliners (Cuba, North Vietnam, North Korea and so on) and obliquely criticised Gorbachev's policies. Marchais had good contacts with Kremlin hardliners.

When the Eastern bloc collapsed in 1989 Marchais reacted by reaffirming faith in the totalitarian project — central planning, state industry and the guiding party. He was forced to go to war against yet another wave of French Communist discontent, this time around his old associate Charles Fiterman.

The party machine enabled Marchais to dominate the December 1990 congress to the extent that there was only one vote against his policies. However, the effort gave him his third heart attack in 15 years.

The collapse of the Communist bloc and then of the Soviet Union itself found the French party in a stolid mood. Marchais after an initial feeling of sympathy with the coup against Gorbachev in 1991, had been made to condemn it by the party's political bureau.

Marchais' line was to declare

that the French Communist Party was not implicated in the activities of the Soviet regime

and, if the Communist bloc had tarnished the ideal of Communism remained as valid as ever.

Georges Marchais continued to head the Communist Party up to the 28th congress of 1994 at which time he stood aside for his nominee, Robert Hue. But he remained a formidable presence within the machine, acting as a

vigilante against any liberalising backsliding. Marchais' federation, the Val-de-Marne, emerged as a stronghold of resistance to the new leadership as it tried to introduce a new style. In December 1995, Marchais was retired from the party's top bodies but still faced possible investigations on charges of illegal party funding.

What Marchais was like as a personality is difficult to say, because he had very few contacts outside the party apparatus. He was supposed to have had a passion for football.

When somebody mentioned deportations and executions in Russia, Marchais sneered: "Yes, they arrested people, they imprisoned people! Well I tell you, they didn't arrest enough. They didn't imprison enough. If they had been tougher and more vigilant, they wouldn't have got into this situation now."

The image of a working-class Parisian lad, outspoken, aggressive, cocksure, was cultivated as a style. Marchais was the most zealous of activists and the most verbally vigorous of his contemporaries, capable of histrionics, turning on floods of tears like an old-time music-hall performer. He applied the Party's line with aggression and agility and the turns and twists of Communist policy were excused with exemplary loyalty.

It was probably inevitable that the Communist Party in France would have declined in the past 20 years, but Georges Marchais showed no flair in managing that decline.

— David Bell



Photograph: AP / Tass

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DEATHS
BALL: Peter, sports writer; born 13 November 1943, died in Manchester 11 November 1997 after a long illness bravely borne. Much loved and sadly missed by Joshua, Noah, Adam and many more family and friends in England and Ireland. The funeral is at St Mary's Parish Church, Rawtenstall, Lancashire at 12 noon on Thursday 20 November. Family flowers only by request, but donations welcome to Leukaemia Research in Manchester, via the funeral directors F. Hamer Ltd, James Street, Rossendale, BB4 7NE (01706 215721).

MEMORIAL SERVICES
SHORT: George James, Reuters Training Editor. A memorial service will be held at St Bride's Church, Fleet Street, City of London, on Monday 30 November 1997 at 12 noon.

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

Marriages

Mr K. Lathiga and Miss N. Thakar

The marriage took place on Sunday 16 November 1997 between Kalpana, son of Mr and Mrs R.J. Lathiga, of Forest Gate, London, and Nimesh, youngest daughter of Mr and Mrs R. Thakar, of Forest Gate, London. Mr Christopher Gordon-Alexander and Ms Hiten Thakar were the witnesses.

Birthdays

Miss Lesley Abdela, founder, All Party 300 Group for Women in Politics, 53; Admiral Sir Jeremy Black, former Commander-in-Chief, Naval Home Command, 65; Mr Stephen Bragg, aeronautical engineer, 74; Mr Malcolm Bruce MP, 53; Dr Gerald Butler, former rector of Liverpool Polytechnic, 77; Lord Craigmyl, chairman, Craigmyl and Co, 74; Mr David Emmanuel, fashion designer, 45; Miss Fenella Fielding, actress, 63; Dr Kenneth Greer, former Bishop of Liverpool, 87; Dame Elizabeth Altmann, 87; Desirée François-Auguste Rodin, sculptor, 1917; Arthur Eric Rowley Gill, stone-carver, ex-

Sir Charles Guthrie, Chief of the General Staff, 59; Mr Colin Hayes, painter, 78; Professor Anthony King, Professor of Government, Essex University, 63; Mr Jeremy Lloyds, cricketer, 43; Mr John Lowther, Lord Lieutenant, Northamptonshire, 74; Sir Charles Mackerras, conductor, 72; Sir Leslie Murphy, former chairman, National Enterprise Board, 82; Lord Polwarth, Vice-Lord Lieutenant, Borders Region, 81; Mr Jonathan Ross, broadcaster, 37; The Right Rev John Satterthwaite, former Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe, 72; Mr Martin Scorsese, film director, 55; Mr Paul Trussell MP, 42; Mr James Warwick, actor,

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FINANCIAL JOURNAL OF THE YEAR

London operations could suffer as plunging Nikkei threatens Japanese institutions

Japan's deepening financial crisis looks set to spread to London as Yamaichi, the country's fourth largest securities house, prepares to close its overseas operations, with the loss of 2,500 jobs. John Wilcock reports on fears that a triple weakening of Japanese stocks, bonds and currency this week could trigger a crisis in its overstretched banking system.

Yamaichi Securities will cut its staff by a third in just over two years, gradually withdraw from its overseas operations and set up two subsidiaries under a holding company by April, the firm said yesterday, casting doubt over the future of its London operation.

No one in Yamaichi's London office was available for comment yesterday. It is unclear what, if anything, will happen to the London operations.

In Tokyo Yamaichi said that by April 2000 it will slash staff to 5,000 from 7,500. As the Nikkei fell last week, Yamaichi's share price dropped by nearly a fifth last Friday alone, and traded briefly below Y100, two-and-a-half times less than its share price a month ago and a fraction of its Y3,000 share price in the late 1980s.

This spurred rumours of a non-Japanese rescue bid for Yamaichi. Such rumours would previously have been laughed at by Japanese financiers but are now taken more seriously, as Japan's Ministry of Finance appears unwilling to launch a rescue operation itself.



Going down: People in Tokyo walk past an electronic board flashing the Nikkei stock average, down 206 points in Friday's morning session. The index ended at 15,082, down 344, after hitting a low of 14,966

Photograph: Reuter

The Nikkei 225 stock index plunged to its lowest since July 1995 on Friday, closing 344 points down at 15,082, on disappointment over economic stimulus measures from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. At one point the index fell below the psychologically important 15,000 level.

The most serious immediate problem is that Japanese banks hold much of their capital reserves in the form of equity investments, the value of which have fallen rapidly in recent months. Further falls in the stock market will make them technically insolvent. Japanese investors are bracing themselves for another tough week. "Concern over a triple-weakening [of stocks, bonds and the yen] is very strong," said Soichi Okuda, senior economist at Nippon Credit Bank in Tokyo yesterday.

Larry Summers, US deputy Treasury Secretary, flew from Washington to Tokyo yesterday

for talks today with Japanese finance ministers in an effort to head off the growing crisis. Japanese banks hold huge amounts of US government bonds, and if they start selling those off to repair their battered balance sheets, America's own finances would be badly hit.

Some observers think the

Care First battle set to escalate

The battle for control of Care First looked set to escalate this week, as speculation intensified that two venture capital companies were poised to throw their hats into the ring. But Leo Paterson finds Bupa is still confident of winning.

Bupa, the private medical insurer, hit back yesterday at weekend speculation that it could lose out in the battle to take over Care First, the UK nursing home operator.

A spokesperson for Bupa yesterday expressed confidence that Bupa would be able to win over shareholders. He said: "Bupa has made a full, fair and firm offer. As far as I know, it's the only offer that is on the table at the moment."

Care First, which last week recommended that its shareholders reject Bupa's £241m offer, is currently believed to be talking to two other parties.

Chai Patel, chief executive of Care First until just two months ago, is heading a consortium understood to be backed by BC Partners, the venture capitalist, and is expected formally to throw his hat into the ring this week. Warburg Pincus, the American venture capital firm,

P&O/Stena link set for UK and European approval

After a year of waiting, P&O and Stena, the ferry companies, look set to get the green light for their proposed tie-up from both the UK and European competition authorities this week. A spokesperson for P&O said: "We have heard nothing officially, but all the indications are that there will be an announcement on Wednesday or Thursday."

However, the proposed joint venture, to be called P&O Stena Line, is expected to be allowed to proceed only if the two companies agree to certain conditions designed to alleviate competition authority concerns. The competition authorities are likely to impose caps on brochure prices, to require that P&O and Stena surrender ferry berths at Dover and to insist that the joint venture, which will control around 75 per cent of ferry crossings from Dover, is run separately from the companies' other operations.

A P&O spokesperson said yesterday that it would be premature to speculate about the conditions to be imposed, but admitted that the European authorities, in particular, had been concerned to ensure that the joint venture would be independently run.

'Interim managers needed'

Companies that fail to employ temporary or interim managers to fill management holes can run into long-term problems, according to a survey by Greythorn, the human resources company. Nearly two-thirds of companies surveyed admitted that long-term management absences led to over-worked key staff and disrupted productivity. One-sixth of respondents reported that management gaps generated resentment towards the organisation. Will Patching, Greythorn's managing director, said demand for interim managers was likely to grow in the years to come.

Pay rises for Royal staff

Staff at Royal & Sun Alliance, the UK's largest insurer, are set to secure pay rises of up to 10 per cent. Employees are to be balloted on the remuneration package, which includes more holidays and a performance-related pay system, but trade unions have recommended that staff accept the proposals. The ballot result is due on 23 December. The proposals will ensure that "all staff will get some sort of pay rise", according to Bifu, the banking union.

Smaller companies do not expect the strong pound to harm their export prospects

Small and medium sized companies do not think the strong pound will harm their export prospects, a new survey indicates. It coincides with a prediction that the Bank of England will have to raise interest rates more than its recent Inflation Report hinted because it is wrong to assume exports and growth will slow quickly.

The survey, by investment group 3i, found that small and medium sized companies are confident about their export prospects. According to 3i: "This

picture is consistent with the Bank of England's Inflation Report ... which noted that there had been little reduction in the volume of British exports since August 1996 despite sterling's appreciation of around 20 per cent."

Brian Larcombe, chief executive of 3i, said: "It is encouraging to see these businesses resilient in the face of a strong pound, though it is difficult to say at this stage whether we have yet seen the full impact of stronger sterling." The judgment that the strong cur-

rency would now start to bite lay behind the Bank's prediction of a sharp slowdown in growth in the early part of next year. This forecast - published for the first time in the latest Inflation Report - allowed the Bank to predict a favourable outlook of inflation staying on target for the next two years.

However, a report published today by the investment bank Lehman Brothers says the Bank of England forecast is implausible. Economist Michael Dicks said the Bank's outlook implied that the economy would slow from growing at a pace double its long-run potential to well under half its potential in the space of six months.

He predicts a much gentler slowdown, implying that for the next one or two quarters the economy will grow at a pace far faster than the Bank has assumed.

Mr Dicks said: "Unless growth does slow abruptly next year, the Bank will have to tighten the monetary stance, perhaps appreciably. Otherwise

it will miss its inflation target." Interest rates would climb to 8 per cent in the summer from their current level of 7.25 per cent, he predicted, with the next increase occurring as early as January or February 1998.

The 3i survey lends some support to the argument that growth will not slow that sharply. The survey found that significantly more companies expected to increase rather than decrease the value of their exports over the coming 12 months.

NatWest dismisses speculation of a merger with Barclays

Barclays and NatWest worked hard yesterday to counter rampant speculation that Barclays is seeking a merger between the two banks. Rumours that NatWest's chairman, Lord Alexander, and two other non-executive directors are likely to step down, were also denied, reports John Wilcock

Tesco) and John Melbourn (ex-NatWest) left, we have been actively searching for replacement non-execs. We have got Pen Kent, which leaves us one short."

He refused to comment on the idea that institutional shareholders want Lord Alexander to step down, following the U-turn on NatWest's former strategy of expanding its investment banking arm, NatWest Markets (NWM).

The spokesman also refused to be drawn on the heated competition to buy NWM's equities arm, which is being pursued by Deutsche Morgan Grenfell and Bankers Trust. "We did turn down a derisory approach from DMG. If someone comes along with an offer, it is our responsibility to consider it," he said.

As for a merger with Barclays, he said: "We've had no talks with Barclays or offers from Barclays. We're getting on with running our business."

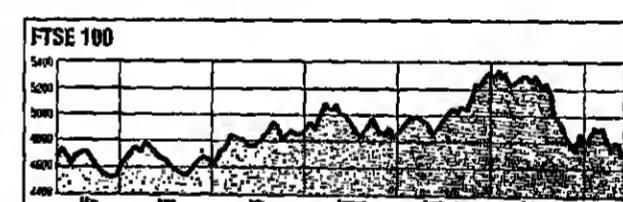
"We're not sitting in some defensive bunker," he concluded.

Insiders at Barclays further point out that observers may be getting over-excited by the prospect of a big strategic initiative following last week's disposal of BZW's equities and investment banking operations to Credit Suisse First Boston.

In fact Barclays is keeping more parts of BZW in revenue terms than it is selling. If there are any changes in direction, they will be spurred by the need to prepare for European Monetary Union, insiders say.

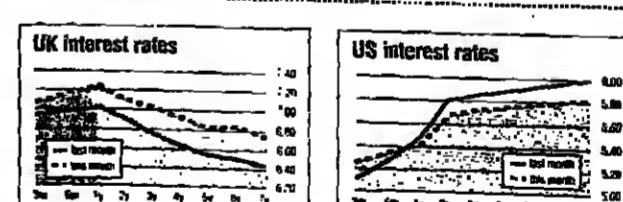
Most observers in the City are bemused by the continuing rumours of merger intentions from Barclays, since such a link would run into massive competition objections from the authorities. The rumours are fuelled by the prospect of dazzling cost savings.

STOCK MARKETS



Indices	Close	Wk's chg	Wk's chg%	52 wk high	52 wk low	Wk(%)
FTSE 100	14,741.80	-22.50	-0.15	15,082.7	14,682.7	3.68
FTSE 250	4,586.50	-52.00	-1.12	4,963.8	4,321.8	3.529
FTSE 350	2,296.90	-13.90	-0.60	2,570.5	1,935.7	3.65
FTSE All Share	2,515.14	-14.12	-0.56	2,507.68	1,935.55	3.624
FTSE SmallCap	2,098.6	-21.30	-0.92	2,047.4	2,127.5	3.265
FTSE Retail	1,952.7	-12.70	-0.66	1,948.5	1,198.7	3.425
FTSE AIM	865.7	-1.50	-0.76	1,138	865.9	1.056
Dow Jones	7,672.48	-110.76	-1.44	8,259.03	6,239.05	1.776
Nikkei	15,082.52	-753.84	-4.76	21,460.57	15,082.22	1.022
Hong Kong	9,957.33	-147.17	-1.46	16,820.31	8,775.88	4.023
Sax	3730.94	31.05	0.84	4,459.89	2,756.11	2.137

INTEREST RATES



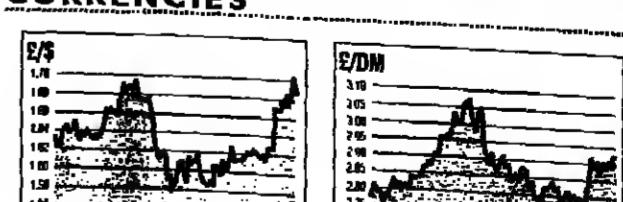
Money Market Rates	3 month	1 yr chg	1 yr chg%	7 yr chg	7 yr chg%	Long term	1 yr chg
UK	7.25	-0.25	-3.33	7.50	+0.25	7.50	-0.25
US	7.50	-0.25	-3.33	8.00	+0.50	8.00	-0.50
Japan	0.42	-0.08	-18.57	0.48	-0.16	1.85	-0.91
Germany	3.76	0.58	15.44	4.13	0.83	5.57	-0.26

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price up	Wk's chg	% chg
Profitis	235.5	9.5	14.88
Calor Energy	487.5	7.5	13.77
British Energy	401.5	6.5	16.00
Gas & Wire	512.5	18.5	10.22

Falls	Price dn	Wk's chg	% chg
Lonrho	88	-4	-4.45
Royal & Sun	509	-15	-12.24
Morgan Crucible	420.5	0.5	-11.19
Imrica Group	266.5	-8.5	-11.02

CURRENCIES



Period	Index	Wk's chg	Yr's chg
May	1,693.0	+0.15	1,664.6
June	2,929.7	+1.40pt	2,512.0
July	2,123.0	+13.58	1,857.7
Aug	104.10	+0.80	91.90
Sept	106.10	1.40	96.20
Oct	106.10	1.40	96.20

OTHER INDICATORS

| Commodity | Index |<th
| --- | --- |

19/BUSINESS



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GROWTH

US consumers keep the world out of recession

Freddie Couples, a laid-back genius of an American golfer, recently played an important tournament in Japan. Leaving the 18th green, he was asked by a local reporter whether he enjoyed playing golf in Asia. "Asia?" said a puzzled Freddie. "I have never been there."

Sadly for the Japanese, Freddie's view of their geographical location is not shared by more more orthodox scholars. Quite clearly, the chronic long-term problems of the Japanese economy are being made much worse by its close proximity to the Asian meltdown. The key question now is whether the Asians will suck the rest of the world into recession with them.

A previous column in this series argued that the emerging market and Japanese domestic shocks might reduce GDP in the developed economies by about 0.6 per cent next year, and might reduce global GDP by about twice that amount. These are significant numbers, and are much higher than the rather complacent estimate of 0.2-0.3 per cent of GDP published last week by the OECD. But these Asian shocks need to be set against the context of a strong US consumer, with surging investment activity in America, and tentative signs of life in domestic demand in continental Europe.

One figure is telling in this regard: US domestic demand on its own accounts for 28 per cent of global GDP, whereas the combined GDP of Asia (ex Japan) and Latin America accounts for only 16 per cent. California alone is about the size of China and India combined. (All these figures are estimated at actual exchange rates. At exchange rates which more correctly reflect purchasing power parity, the emerging

economics would appear larger than these figures imply, since several important currencies, including the Chinese yuan, are severely undervalued according to official statistical sources.)

The world may be moving into an era where the emerging economies are becoming increasingly important, but we should not go prematurely overboard on this. The motor for world growth is still located primarily in a handful of developed economies, though to a smaller extent than decade ago. For example, if projections for domestic demand in the US and the EU are raised by 1 per cent next year, while the entire GDP of Latin America and Asia (ex Japan) is reduced by 3 per cent, then world GDP would be exactly unchanged.

In the past few months, this is broadly the pattern of the revisions to forecasts which has taken place. For example, since the onset of the Asian crisis in the summer, the Goldman Sachs forecast for domestic demand in the US next year has been revised up by about 1.2 per cent, while GDP in the Asian economies (ex China, India and Japan) has been revised down by 3.3 per cent, and Latin America has been revised down by 1.3 per cent. In addition, domestic demand in Japan has been revised down by a phenomenal 4.2 per cent. Consequently, weaker growth throughout the emerging economies and Japan has been partly offset by stronger domestic demand in the US.

Overall, the combined ef-

fect of these three revisions has been to reduce the level of OECD real GDP next year by only 0.3 per cent compared to Goldman Sachs' July projections, and to reduce world GDP by only 0.6 per cent.

However, while there should be no recession next year, the shocks which have hit the global economy in the past few months have genuinely increased the risks in the system, since it is increasingly apparent that domestic demand in the US remains too strong, while domestic demand in much of the rest of the world remains too weak. In the short term, the benign way out of this dilemma would be for the dollar's trade-weighted index to rise, simultaneously reducing inflation pressures inside the US and redistributing global demand to the areas that need it most (ie Asia and Europe). By holding down US inflation pressures, this might prevent a tightening in US monetary policy that would otherwise spell the end of the equity bull market.

The problem is that this benign process can only continue for as long as the strong

dollar does not lead to excessive imbalances in the current account positions of the major economies. So far, this has not happened.

Although there have been signs of a widening trade imbalance between the US and Japan, this has been more than offset by capital outflows from Japan, so the dollar has been trading at its 1997 highs against the yen. Furthermore, though the dollar has adjusted downwards against the European currencies, it has simultaneously moved sharply higher against emerging currencies, the trade-weighted index for the US currency has also been trading at recent highs.

But trade imbalances between the US, Japan and the EU now look set to rise quite rapidly in coming quarters. It is possible that the threat of this will bring down the dollar quite quickly, in which case the dilemma facing Alan Greenspan's Federal Reserve will markedly worsen - they will either have to watch US inflation rise or tighten US monetary policy in an environment of great financial market turbulence.

That will spell trouble for global markets.

Perhaps more likely, the dollar's trade-weighted index will continue firm for a while as emerging currencies and (possibly) the yen fall further against the US unit. On this scenario, the Fed may stay on the sidelines for a few more months, while they assess the damage done to the US economy from the emerging market shock. Growth in global GDP would probably stay close to trend, while global inflation

would remain around its "optimal" 2 per cent rate. Things would then look quite good for a time.

But beneath the surface, trouble may be brewing. It would hardly be a new event if a rising exchange rate temporarily suppressed domestic inflation pressures, but later led to trade imbalances which triggered instability. A firm dollar/weak yen scenario, which may seem beneficial to markets in the near term, would probably carry the seeds of its own eventual destruction, in that it would lead to a dangerous widening in trade imbalances and - much later - to a collapse in the dollar. This dollar collapse would then unleash pent-up American inflationary pressures which have been suppressed so far by the strong currency. All this would obviously increase the risk of a hard landing in 12-24 months time.

In summary, the series of different shocks and "news" in recent weeks have weakened activity in Japan, Asia and Latin America, strengthened domestic activity in the US; and increased the risks of wage pressures emanating from a tight US labour market. Taken together, these three factors are most unlikely to lead to global recession, but have clearly increased the scale of global trade imbalances, and made the task of the Fed much more complicated.

Those who see a stronger dollar as a benign way out of this problem may well be proved right for a while, but this would only exacerbate trade problems later, and raise the spectre of an eventual hard landing for the US economy. It is premature to fear that this extreme outcome will happen soon, but it has certainly been brought a few steps closer by the events of the past few weeks.

Global domestic demand and GDP forecasts

Domestic demand	Goldman Sachs Forecast in July		Goldman Sachs Forecast now		Change in level
	1997	1998	1997	1998	
US	4.2	2.8	4.4	3.8	+1.2
Japan	1.3	2.0	-0.4	-0.5	-4.2
EU	2.0	2.7	1.9	2.5	-0.8
GDP					
ASEAN	6.3	6.7	4.9	3.5	-4.6
MES	5.5	5.9	5.8	4.8	-1.4
Latin America	4.5	5.0	4.8	3.4	-1.3
OECD	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.5	-0.3
World	3.8	3.8	3.7	3.3	-0.5

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Garden grows in fertile soil of science and the senses



Space and thyme: A gardener surveys his work in Charles Jencks' 'garden of cosmic speculation' in south-west Scotland, intended as a metaphor for scientific theories on the creation of the universe

Photograph: Colin McPherson

A provocative experiment is under way marrying scientific theories with radical garden design. Stephen Goodwin, Heritage Correspondent, went to south-west Scotland to see how creation is being represented through landscape and lettuces.

What will archaeologists in centuries to come make of a conical grass-covered mound that stands 50ft high in well-tended parkland? Two paths spiral upwards to its summit without crossing. For stretches the visitor has the curious sensation of walking down when the path is supposed to be going up. On descent, the confusion is reversed.

A religious significance would be the archaeologist's first sunrise. There is just room for two people to stand on the flattened summit with a panorama of distant hills and more intriguing earthworks in the foreground. A place designed, it seems, for worship or sacrifice.

The cone, however, and the 400ft-long earth barrow which twists away in an S by a lake are not the work of priests but features in a "garden of cosmic speculation", created by the architect Charles Jencks and his late wife Maggie Keswick. Covering 30 acres on the Keswick family estate, it is in-

troduced as a metaphor for scientific theories on the creation of the universe, though it can be enjoyed on the simpler level of startlingly innovative garden design.

A leading post modernist - he defined the term - Mr Jencks, an American, sums up the 15 billion years of creation as a "noble and delirious drama" in four parts - the "misnamed" Big Bang created energy; this dynamic pulse partly froze into matter; matter jumped into life; and life begat sentient creatures - "creative, reflective, clever and stupid".

Each jump was the coming forth of the unexpected, Mr Jencks argued in his book *The Architecture of the Jumping Universe*.

"The Universe is an unpredictably creative

as a mad, nineteenth century inventor: it

changes its mind and jumps."

To find the unexpected in such a garden should be no surprise. In a damp, wooded corner known as the Paradise-Hell Garden is a low ring of upside-down trees, roots in the air; step back before ascending a stairway and you see it has been constructed to give an extended perspective.

The two motifs which recur throughout, whether in the ha-ha by the Victorian house, hedges, brick walls and paving are the wave and the twist - are pulses of energy flowing on themselves to create a single force and unravelling in new directions.

"I have never understood why architects, painters and philosophers - following Plato - have thought that the ultimate reality

behind things lies in straight lines, right angles and perfect geometric solids," Mr Jencks said. "Nature is basically curved, warped, undulating, jagged, zig-zagged and sometimes beautifully crinkly. It never looks like a Platonic temple of a railroad."

This approach has caused some

headaches for Alastair Clark, the head gardener, whose task it is to give physical expression to the architect's scientific notions.

"This used to be the best vegetable garden in the country," he observed, standing by a DNA double helix built of blocks, enclosing a waving hand - the whole piece representing the sense of touch. Around it grow nettles, thistles and soft grasses.

The senses - the standard five plus anticipation or intuition - are presented in the physics garden, which at first glance resembles a traditional walled kitchen garden. However, the secondary paths cut and the cobbles in the main paths describe more waves. Flowing curves have been accentuated by planting blocks of different coloured lettuces - a range from pale green to rosso.

Looking up from the same spot, you can brush up on Schrödinger's Equation for the Probability Amplitude of a Quantum Particle. The main mathematical equations are cut in relief on the ridge of the greenhouse.

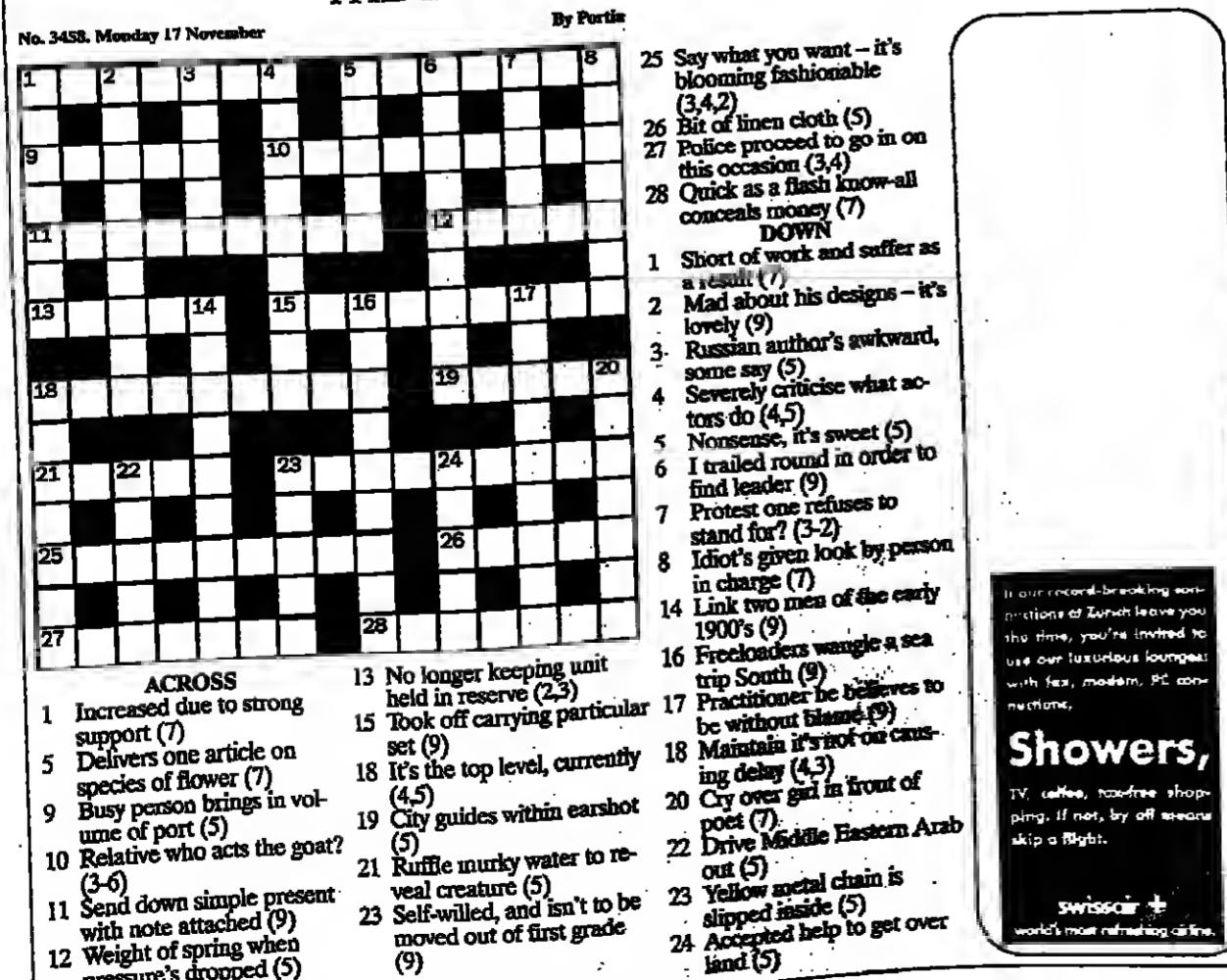
Mr Jencks and his wife began the project in 1990. Maggie Keswick, who died from cancer in 1995, was author of texts on Chinese gardens. She wished to incorporate

rate Taoist notions of "geomancy", shaping the land to heighten the sense of its invisible energies. Taoist philosophers saw hills and mountains as "the bones of the earth" energised with the breath of subterranean dragons. In the surreal mound, the earth "snake" and pools, geomancy and Mr Jencks' wave science have synthesised.

The cosmological garden (not open to the public) is about three-quarters finished. Last week, Mr Clark was working in a hole 10ft square in the physics garden which will become the sense of smell. The curious visitor will step down over beds of aromatic thyme to be confronted by a sculpture of flared nostrils issuing forth the putrid

smell of rotted vegetables. Some of the gardener's tasks are more prosaic. A breeze block stands near the top of a set of steps blocks low level entry to garden. Obeying a law as immutable as those of any of the great mathematicians, rabbits have their sights on the lush turf of the cosmic earthworks.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

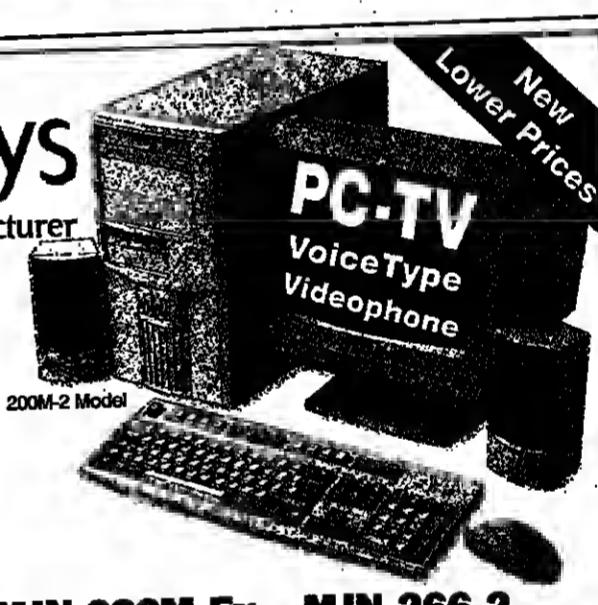


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